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“They that know one another salute afar off.”

JACULA PRUDENTUM.

B R E V I A

SHORT ESSAYS AND APHORISMS

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“FRIENDS IN COUNCIL”



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TO
HIS DAUGHTER ALICE,
THIS WORK
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY
THE AUTHOR.

OST of these Essays were originally published in "Good Words," but they have been carefully revised and corrected in this re-issue.

November, 1870.



SHORT ESSAYS AND APHORISMS.



NO time for it.—That seems to be the thing that we all fail to consider sufficiently in this brief life of ours. Now, if we had the length of life that the patriarchs enjoyed,—after we had learnt everything that was to be learnt, and had made a few discoveries of our own, and had arranged all our affairs most comfortably, there would then be time to spare for carrying on a good, wholesome feud with any of our neighbours, and for annoying the world generally by vexatious diplomacy and long wars. One could then afford to expend a trifle of time, say twenty or thirty years of our lives, in pleasures

of this kind. But with our present short period of existence, there is no time for indulging in these luxuries of mischief.

THERE is not greater nonsense talked about anything than about inconsistency. The truth is, no man ever is inconsistent. His utterances are inconsistent; but, did we know all about him, and about the circumstances which he has to encounter, we should not speak of the man as inconsistent.

A curious illustration of what I mean may be given in this way.

There shall be a father and a son advocating opposite views. The world says, How unlike are these two men; whereas the opposition of their views shows, perhaps, the similarity of their characters: if they agreed now, their ages and their experience of life being so different, it would be a proof of great dissimilarity of character.



WHEN the tourist goes over some old castle or palace, and his attention is arrested by horrible dungeons, torture-chambers,

and oubliettes, he wonders how, in former days, the inhabitants of that castle or palace could have slept comfortably, or revelled, or made love, having cognizance all the time of the horrors that were beneath them. But there is a similar thing everywhere—to wit, Belgravia and Bethnal Green. It is wonderful how completely people can ignore the existence of painful things that are very close to them.



PEOPLE occasionally contend that the sense of property is a thing that should be dulled rather than encouraged. But this is, in some respects, a mistake. If "Rich London" had a keen sense of property in "Poor London," there would be nothing which would have more effect in removing squalidity throughout the metropolis. Whereas, not only the sense of property, but even of neighbourhood, is greatly lost in this huge city.

The squire has a painful sense of property in some poor hovel that is on the outskirts of his estate, but which is his, and unpleasantly reminds him, as he rides by, of Mr. Drummond's saying, "that property has its duties as well as its rights."

ON sunny mornings in early summer, when the mind is most hopeful, and one is prone to take a favourable view of everything and of everybody, one may be disposed to enumerate eleven persons amongst one's friends, relations, and acquaintances, who, we think, might be entrusted with a whip if we ourselves were to be classed amongst the lower animals.

On the other hand, in November days, one cannot make out a list of more than five people who could be thus trusted. Probably the mean number is the right thing; and a man of large acquaintance may admit that there are eight persons whom he would not much fear if he were one of the lower animals, and whom he would allow to be entrusted with a whip.

Among the astounding things to be seen in this strange world, not the least astonishing is the fact of such immense power over himself, over the lower animals, and, to some extent, over all those who come near him, being entrusted to every man. And the word "man," in this case, certainly includes man, woman, and child.

If there are eight persons whom one would

trust with a whip to be used upon oneself, is there more than one upon earth whom one could trust to criticise our works or our actions?



PREFACES are generally very little attended to: that is the reason why so many secrets are unintentionally betrayed. The man to whom a secret is told, remembers the secret because it is something amusing, or interesting, or scandalous; but he forgets the dull preface which preceded it, wherein he was admonished "to be sure not, for the world, to tell anybody what he was going to be told."



OUR life is a continual decadence of power. From one till three years old, we are Lord Paramount Baby. From three till about twenty-seven, we are subject to our superiors—parents, masters, college dons, senior counsel, rectors, and other authorities. From about the age of twenty-seven to the end of our lives we are ruled over by those who are facetiously called our inferiors—wives, sons, daughters, servants, clerks, deputies, and junior partners.

And this is the harshest rule of all, and often the most galling ; for the cruelty of the weak to the strong, of the inferior to the superior, is often very great ; and there is an irony about it which is very painful, though somewhat ludicrous.



WHEN a man in power asks for time to consider anything, it is generally in order that he may be able to consult his immediate inferior, without whose sanction he dares not assent to anything.



ANY one who is much talked of, must be much maligned. This seems to be a harsh conclusion ; but when you consider how much more given men are to depreciate than to appreciate, you will acknowledge that there is some truth in the saying.



THE man at the head of the house can mar the pleasure of the household ; but he cannot make it. That must rest with the woman, and it is her greatest privilege.

WE often suffer ourselves to be put out of all our bearings by some misfortune, not of the most serious kind, which certainly looks very black at the time, but which from its nature cannot be lasting. We are thus like ignorant hens that insist upon going to roost in mid-day because there is a brief transitory eclipse of the sun.



THE love of poetry seldom commences before the beard begins to make its appearance. Boys, honest fellows! generally pronounce all poetry to be, what in their language they call "bosh." The love of poetry is apt to fade away from most men much at the same time as the liking for sweets. Again, the love of poetry is inevitably checked and somewhat suppressed by the labours and anxieties of middle life. It thus appears, that, from careless boyhood up to careful old age, the poets have but a small portion of human existence for them to work upon. Why, therefore, should they often be so laboriously obscure?

IN the investigation of human character, there is one signal mistake made by nearly all investigators. They have formed a notion of the nature and effect of some particular virtue, or vice, or quality. But they will not perceive that the virtue, vice, or quality in question becomes a very different thing when implanted in different persons—for instance, that one man's vanity is so very different from another man's vanity, and probably from every other man's vanity, that it requires a separate investigation for itself. Chemistry, better than anything else, will illustrate the truth of this statement. One elementary substance meets with another elementary substance with which it can combine, and the compound substance thus formed becomes quite different in its properties from either of its component parts. But, to descend from this scientific illustration of the matter, it will suffice to say, that no one human creature being really like another, their respective qualities of which in the abstract we know something, will take different forms and powers according to the personality on which they act. Now Rochefoucault knew a great deal about the selfishness of man, but he would not have been able to

guide or govern individual men by means of their selfishness, any better perhaps than a mere clown, unless he had taken pains to study each individual.

We make some general distinctions, which are not bad as very rough guides, in the characteristics of nations. But you shall have an Englishman or a Frenchman whom no one shall be able to accuse of being un-national, yet who has not one single characteristic of his nation which you can rely upon, as a means to influence him.

Perhaps the greatest error of the kind alluded to, is when a man makes his own mind the measure of another's mind, and thinks that it is influenced in the same way and to the same degree, by passions or qualities having only the same names.



WHERE flatterers fail, is from their vulgar habit of applying the same kind of flattery to all people. They would never be found out, if they knew better. It cannot be said of flattery, as was said by an old winebibber of port wine, "Sir, there are different sorts of port; but all port wine is good." Now, the "sort" is everything in flattery; that it should be the

right sort, addressed to the right man. The famous line in Horace,

“Cui male si palpere recalcitret undique tutus,”

conveys the real truth. It was not that the flattery that was imagined to be addressed to Augustus was bad in itself, but that it was not of a sort which would succeed when applied to him. It is not to be asserted that any man is proof against flattery; only that he is proof against the wrong kind of flattery—that is wrong for him. And even then it must be admitted that the great majority of persons are pleased at seeing that anybody cares to flatter them, even though it is clumsily and provokingly done.



IT is a melancholy fact that one has to go through so many phases of opinion before one can rely upon the truthfulness of delineation of any character represented in history. Henry VIII. has been “whitewashed.” Nero is in the process of being “whitewashed.” And we are learning, from Mr. Spedding, that Bacon was not the meanest of mankind.

Now, there is an historical personage for who

I want to say something, as I suspect he has been largely calumniated. It is our patron saint, St. George of "merrie England." It will always be a good joke against the English, that they have chosen a contractor for their patron saint; for St. George made his fortune by getting a contract to supply the army with bacon. But this does not imply the extent of vice and wickedness with which poor St. George is universally credited. Gibbon has no words too bad for him. Now, let me take down Gibbon, and show you what may be said on the other side, and how loosely the accusations against St. George are framed.

"George was born in Epiphania in Silesia, in a fuller's shop."

"From this obscure and servile origin he raised himself by the talents of a parasite."

Now, why "servile," why "parasite?" Surely a free man, as well as a serf, may be born in a fuller's shop! Suppose the poor youth, from his agreeable manners and activity in business, found friends and patrons in a higher class, is that any blame to him? Horace says well,

"Principibus placuisse viris haud ultima laus est."

Gibbon proceeds thus:—"They procured for

their worthless dependant a lucrative commission or contract to supply the army with bacon."

Why "worthless?" There is not a particle of evidence to show that, at that time, he had done anything which justifies the word "worthless."

Then Gibbon tells of his malversations as regards this contract. I am not able to rebut the statement, but I should very much like to hear what St. George would have to say to it.

"He," then, says Gibbon, "embraced, with real or affected zeal, the profession of Arianism."

Why "affected?" why "profession?" Here are two most damaging words introduced in a most sinister and unwarrantable manner. This is the way in which men's characters are ruined by insinuation, and this is the way in which great historians sometimes write. How could Gibbon know whether the zeal was affected or not? Almost every Christian in that day was a vehement Arian or a vehement Athanasian!

Then observe the next sentence. "From the love or the ostentation of learning, he collected a valuable library of history, rhetoric, philosophy, and theology; and the choice of the prevailing faction promoted George of Cappadocia to the throne of Athanasius."

Why "ostentation?" Again, I say, how could Gibbon know whether it was "love," or "osten-

tation," of learning? It seems to me rather in a man's favour that, after he had made his fortune, as a contractor, he should have devoted a large part of it to the formation of a great library. By the way, it was the grandest library of that age, and the Emperor Julian used to borrow books from it.

Then, of course, he is represented to have behaved infamously as an archbishop; but it must be recollected that these infamies are chiefly narrated by members of the Athanasian party, after he had been torn to pieces by its minions. Now, suppose there should ever come to be such a person as a Protestant pope, and he, or one of his successors, were to make saints of the two great leaders of political parties in England, what spiteful things, by no means absolutely true, would the partizans of the opposite factions (a party would be sure to be called a faction in the future "Gibbon's" pages) bring against St. William and St. Benjamin!



ILL-NATURED deeds are very rare when compared with ill-natured words; in short, the proportion of the deeds to the words is as Falstaff's pennyworth of bread to his mon-

strous quantity of sack. It would be a shrewdly good bargain for the world to agree that ill-natured *deeds* should be multiplied by ten, if only the ill-natured *words* were to be diminished by one-half ; for, though the deed may be a much larger and more potent thing than the word, it often does not give nearly as much pain. Dependants would gain very much by this bargain, for they seldom suffer much from deeds, but a great deal from words. Many a man goes through life scattering ill-natured remarks in all directions, who has never, to his knowledge, done an ill-natured deed, and who probably considers himself a very good-natured fellow, but one, however, who takes a knowing view of all human beings, and of all human affairs, and is not to be imposed upon, as he takes care to say, by anything or anybody.



WHICH, of the seven supports to human nature, under troubles and difficulties, can be most relied upon, and least spared ? The seven supports are good spirits, good temper, pride, vanity, power of endurance, hopefulness, and the love of others. To the above

question, a cynic answered, "Without doubt, vanity."

Why?

Because it is always present. Common parlance proves this fact. You can say of a man, He has lost his good spirits, his good temper, his love for others, his pride, his power of endurance, his hopefulness; but who ever heard any one say of another, "He has lost his vanity?"



IT would be a curious subject for investigation, to observe how those resolves are adopted which have great influence upon the lives of men. A statesman of our time once remarked that he had not been so much influenced by the things that were meant to influence him, such as wise sayings in books, or by anything that had been directly addressed to him, as he had by chance remarks, made, perhaps in common conversation, which he found were singularly applicable to himself. Perhaps a similar thing might be observed, if men were observant in such matters, as regards their resolves generally. It is in this

case, as often happens, that the shaft, shot carelessly, which was not aimed at the gold, goes right into the centre of it.



THAT word "gradually" has come to have a wrong meaning in most men's minds. They do not think of it as applying to something which occurs by steps according to the Latin derivation, but as something which moves up or down an inclined plane. Now it was the remark of one of the shrewdest men of our time, that almost every mental operation seems to go by steps. In learning anything this is to be seen. Yesterday there was a great difficulty; to-day it is overcome by some sudden apprehension of the mind, which may be compared to a step. So, in the moral workings of our nature, every movement seems to go by steps. This is especially to be noted as regards retrograde or descending movement. A good resolve is formed, but it is gradually let down like a boat in a canal, by successive locks. In one of Miss Ferrier's or Miss Austin's novels, a son is enjoined by his father, on his death-bed, to provide for his sisters. The son begins by thinking that he must

allow his sisters £1,000 a-year; but by successive locks he gradually lowers his generous intention till it comes down to a determination to send them some fruit, flowers, and game occasionally, which as he, or his wife, says, is all that his good father could have intended.



WHAT an immense respect one has for a man who is just dead, thinking that he may have suddenly come into such a vast estate of knowledge! This feeling goes off after a time, when one thinks that he is only one of the majority; but at first it is a striking—nay, an almost appalling thought. And the newly-dead man may be what we call an ignorant peasant, which adds much to the dread nature of the thought.



WHAT a remarkable thing is the *claque* in French theatres. It may not be known to all readers what this *claque* is, and so I will describe it. It consists of a body of men hired to applaud, and whose applause is regulated by

the leader of the *claque*. The applause begins and ends simultaneously, and is totally unlike real applause, which rises gradually and afterwards falls into a dropping fire of clapping.

When I am at a French theatre I am fascinated by the *claque*, which suggests to me two or three strange thoughts. First it shows me the immense strength that there is in an institution, however absurd and uncalled for it may be. Everybody despises the *claque*; it checks the very thing it was meant to encourage; but still it lives on. That, too, amongst such an intelligent people as the French.

Then I think how, in modern times, elaborate arrangement and mechanism have entered into all forms of pleasure. The sportsman no longer shouldered his gun and takes what luck he may find in sport; but all is arranged for him beforehand, and he keeps his game-books with an accuracy worthy of a merchant's clerk. Dinners, balls, evening-parties, have become matters of business and policy; and there is little left in the way of pleasure that is hearty, genuine, joyous, or spontaneous.



LET us see who are the people who make society disagreeable.

First, there are managing people. The managing people are of three kinds. They are either imperious persons, or very good-natured persons, or very conceited persons. And sometimes the three motives which cause a man or woman to be troublesomely managing are combined in one and the same person.

Now, the objection which most people have to being managed is, that they have an unconquerable wish to manage for themselves.

But there is another and a very potent cause why people often reject the most excellent proposals for being managed. It is, that the managing person does not know some secret but very strong motive of the person to be managed ; and therefore all the manager's wise suggestions are beside the mark.

Let us take a familiar instance which might occur in real life. There is a young man (we will call him Mr. Amans) in the same house with one of the tribe of managers. Mr. Amans is asked by what train he is returning to London, and he says by the 10 o'clock train. This is in the smoking-room, after the ladies have gone to bed. Up jumps the manager, whips out

his "Bradshaw," and tells Mr. Amans that it is positive insanity not to go by the 9 o'clock train. "If you go by the 10 o'clock train, a very slow train, you will not get into town till 4 o'clock in the morning—a most uncomfortable time; whereas, if you go by the 9, you will be in by 12 at night, and have a good night's rest. Do let me order the carriage for half-past 8 o'clock!" The young man looks very sheepish, stammers out some foolish objection to the 9 o'clock train; but holds his ground, and will not be managed. And why? Mr. Amans thought that there was a faint return on the part of Miss Amata to the warm pressure of his hand when he bade her good night that evening; and he would lose fifty nights' rest, and rightly too, in order to ascertain whether that faint return of pressure will be repeated, or, perhaps, increased, on the ensuing morning. Now, the family breakfast is not until 9 o'clock.

The above is an instance of a trivial and familiar nature; but the same thing runs through life. When the manager thinks any of us unreasonable, he may reflect that perhaps he does not know all the motives, which, however unreasonable, determine us to a course of action contrary to that which he so ably recommends.

Then there is the class of people whom I

venture to call the *observantines*. They must make remarks about everything ; and there are a great many things in this life which had better pass without any remark.

Then there are the objective people. Let any one say anything, however wise or foolish, important or unimportant, they must instantly take an objection. They really do not mean to abide by their objection ; but they must take it. Nothing should be done without being well argued over ; and it is their business to see that objection is made to whatever is proposed.

Then there are the explanative people. Now, even the cleverest man, and the most adroit talker, utters many sentences which are needless. You see at once what he is going to say. But the explanative person will not let you off one single jot of explanation. His talk is like the writing of a stupid book for children.

Then there is the discursive talker. You are discussing the effect of the large importations of gold from Australia. He unfortunately enters into the discussion, and in a short time you find that the original subject has vanished, and that you are discussing the mode of rearing pine-apples at Chatsworth. This kind of man seems to be sent into the world to destroy everything like good conversation.

— is always very great upon the subject of the rights, privileges, and duties of belligerents. One of his conclusions is rather startling. It is that a general has no right to lay waste a country and to destroy its provisions without first killing the inhabitants; for, as he says with much emphasis, nature does not provide too much food, and starvation is a most cruel form of death. Such are the tender mercies which can be maintained to be duties in the prosecution of war.



COURAGE is a most difficult thing either to understand or to define, as there are so many sorts of it, and it is so much complicated with nervousness and other mental or physical affections. We now know that sensation is conveyed from the eye to the brain more rapidly in some men than in others. This must make a difference in readiness—a thing which is often mistaken for courage. Then again the different degrees of largeness and swiftness of intellectual apprehension must greatly affect the outward show of courage. One man, for instance, takes in at once the total danger: another, whose apprehension is not so rapid, takes in only a part.

Supposing the courage of these two men to be equal, the manifestation of that courage on any given occasion of danger occurring to both of them, will be very different. And, in general, as we never know how great or how small the danger in question appears to the man whose courage we are considering, we cannot measure the extent of his courage. Then there are unconquerable aversions and terrors—probably descending from ancestors, or implanted in early childhood; and the man who is exceedingly brave on all ordinary occasions, is childishly timid when his particular terror or aversion comes upon him. We see this when a great general shivers away from a spider, but we do not consider that there may be something similar in the case of dangers which nearly resemble one another—such, for example, as a battle and a fire. The man, who could withstand, with his fellow-men in single line, a charge of cavalry, may lose all command of himself on the occurrence of a fire in his own house, because of some homely reminiscence unknown to the observing bystander. Altogether I think it is very rash to pronounce about any man, that he is a brave man or a coward.



OF all the resources of government, none are so wastefully employed as its powers of conferring honour. This is true of nearly all countries. In Great Britain the waste is not occasioned by profusion, but by caprice, uncertainty, irrelevancy. The king (it was in George III.'s time) is asked to give a right of going through the park to some gentleman. "No, no," replies the king, "I cannot do that; but you may make him an Irish baron." The above is not an unfavourable specimen of the way in which honours have been granted.

There are many points worthy of notice as regards this subject.

First, there is the foolish idea that men do not care for honours. This is an entire mistake. There is nothing in the world they care for more.

Then there is the delusion that the granting of many honours would weaken the value of them. At present, when what few honours are granted, are given for the most trivial and inadequate reasons, these honours have anything but their full value. Of course, it takes away from the value of a peerage when a man is made a peer because he is rich, and because he has fought party battles in his county or his borough,

with liberality and vigour. Everybody feels that that ~~is~~ not a service done to the state; and accordingly the honour loses much of its value and its dignity.

The same with knighthood. If that honour is given as a mere formality because a man has presented an address, or has received a sovereign at dinner, the honour in question is proportionately lowered.

Then it is said, and this is a favourite argument of men in power, that if you oblige one man by giving him an honour, you disoblige three or four persons who think that they have exactly similar claims. There is some truth in this, but it must be remembered that you keep those three or four persons in a state of hopeful expectation that if they work on, they too will eventually gain the honour. There is no telling the quantity of good service that a government might get from people, if these people only saw that they had a fair chance of receiving honour for good service. And frequently there is no other way of paying them, for they do not want money. Now, as the tendency in modern times is to make government more and more difficult, it behoves government to husband all its resources, and to make the best use of them.

I pass to another head of the subject. A

state which has many colonies should seek to win its eminent colonists, and to knit the infant to the parent state by a careful distribution of honours in these colonies. When an eminent colonist can say, not merely *Civis Anglicanus sum*, but *Eques Anglicanus sum*, depend upon it, he is sure to become an attached citizen to the imperial government. The Privy Council of England should be enriched and enlightened by the introduction into it of some of the most distinguished colonists, who, when in this country, should be able, as it were, to have some voice in the government.

Now, to another branch of the subject. Why should we chiefly honour and dignify the members of one or two professions or callings, to the exclusion of the rest? Why should many lawyers and soldiers be promoted to honour, while doctors, and surgeons, men of science, men of letters, great merchants, great employers of labour, distinguished civil servants, are for the most part left out in the cold? In France they could have their Baron Dupuytren, while in England there is not an instance of a great medical man being raised to the peerage, though it is said Sir Astley Cooper much desired that honour.

Again, as to men of science, art, and literature,

people say it would be so difficult to found an order of merit for such men. I cannot see the difficulty. It appears to me that the world knows very well, or nearly well enough, who are the distinguished men in science, art, and literature. Some mistakes would of course be made; but, upon the whole, the public would take care that the dispensers of honours to this class of men should not go far wrong.

There is another very important point connected with this subject, namely, that this just dispensation of honours would tend to correct the inordinate craving after wealth, which is the sin and sorrow of the present day. Moreover it would mitigate the frantic desire of getting into Parliament which besets so many men who are unfit for that vocation, but who discern in it the only way of arriving at personal honour and social distinction.



WHAT *will become of the doll?*—The doll affords the most significant distinction between the natures of man and woman. The boy breaks it to pieces to see what it is made of, while the girl treats it with infinite tenderness and love. It would be a great mistake to

imagine that the affection for the doll is ever absent from the feminine heart. Although the little creature compounded of wax, or wood and sawdust, may be laid aside, another doll always takes its place. It may be a father, or a brother, or a lover, or a husband, or a child, or the clergy, or a pet author, or a favourite politician; but there is always the doll of some kind or other, which must be taken care of, and caressed and made much of. Moreover, the doll's life is chiefly made endurable to it by this petting. If women are to enter largely and seriously into the affairs of men; if they are to become merchants, and lawyers, and doctors, and politicians, and statesmen, I only ask, *What will become of the doll?*



IT may be very stupid of me, but I cannot recognise the justice of the present laws of copyright. If I have a piece of land only big enough to grow three gooseberry bushes upon it, the law is my friend for ever as regards this little bit of land. I may have gained it by a dexterous manipulation of butter. It may have descended to me because my great-great-great-grandfather knocked down somebody

and took the land. Or that much-respected relative may have contrived, not without some loss of character, to have been always on the right side, in times of civil discord. Perhaps this distant ancestor was a judicious gipsy, who squatted upon a piece of waste land, which, however, has now become very valuable. In whatever way this land may have been gained, the law loves and protects me, its possessor, or rather loves it as a bit of property. The law even gives me a valid right to all the air above my land, and all the minerals beneath it.

Now look at the other case. Out of my mind I construct something which I cause to be recorded in black marks upon pieces of white paper. Some people—perhaps wisely, perhaps foolishly—are willing to give me bits of gold and silver for these blackened pieces of paper of mine. It is not so very easy to persuade them to make this exchange; and I often, perhaps, blacken paper much to my own detriment. But still, sometimes these good people are quite ready and willing to give their silver and gold for my blackened paper. Now, why should the good law, that is so tender and loving to me as regards the bit of land that I possess, be so harsh to me about my bits of blackened paper? It says that any body else may blacken the

paper in the same way as I have done, after a few years have passed, and that my poor grandchild—so like me too, as everybody says he is—shall have no interest or property in my blackened bits of paper. I cannot see the justice of this proceeding. It seems to me very much like robbery.

Some say—but their saying does not console me—that my blackening of paper may be very interesting and valuable to the human race, and that my naughty grandchild may say that there has been enough of this blackening of grandpapa's, and that he should wish to put a stop to it. I have not, however, observed that many persons are anxious to put a stop to anything, however injurious to the public, from which they derive a revenue. And in the present case it has been admitted that this blackening of paper done by me has been useful and valuable to mankind. My grandson, if he is at all like his grandfather, will not refuse any money which may come to him honestly.



ALMOST everybody is agreed that everything in the way of a "function," as they call it now-a-days, or of an entertainment, is too

long. Of course there are exceptions. A pantomime is never too long for a child ; but, as a general rule, everybody would be glad to have these " functions" and entertainments shortened. The only question is, what should be the amount of shortening? The timid and the conservative would only shorten by one-fifth ; the extreme reformers by one-half ; the moderate party—amongst whom I should wish to class myself—would be contented with one third. The advantage to religion of this shortening would be incalculable—especially as regards the young.



IT is very puzzling, sometimes, to distinguish between jealousy and envy, for they often run into one another, and are blended together. The most valid distinction seems to be this, that jealousy is always personal. The envious man desires some good which another possesses ; the jealous man would often be content to be without the good so that that other did not possess it.



IT would be comparatively much less difficult to invent a plausible account of the meaning and purpose of this world if it were only inhabited by human beings. But the existence of animals complicates the question hugely. It would be well if we could believe with Descartes, that animals were mere phantasms, and had no real existence. But who can look at that bull-dog, and consider him to be a phantasm? Observe how intelligently he looks up at the sound of his name, and expresses a wish to contradict this vain theory, remarking that Descartes was only a Frenchman; or, taking it another way, that French poodle dogs might possibly be phantasms, but English bull-dogs certainly not.



THE disciples of Confucius have given a description of the behaviour of The Master, as they called him, on the important occasions of his life. They say that, when in the presence of the prince, his manner displayed *respectful uneasiness*. There could hardly be given any two words which more fitly describe the manner of most Englishmen when in society.

I AM lost in astonishment when I contemplate the "questions," as they are called, which are debated by the different religious parties, and respecting which they become furious. Vestments, intonings, processions, altar-cloths, rood-screens, and genuflections, are made to be matters of the utmost importance; and all the while the really great questions are in abeyance. It reminds me of children playing at marbles on the slopes of a volcano, which has already given sure signs of an approaching eruption.



I WISH I could persuade men of science and men who have peculiar gifts of investigation and examination, that it would be most desirable for them, and a worthy employment of their gifts, to examine what, for want of a better term, we may call spiritual phenomena. Let them remember, that to dispel error may be nearly as important as to ascertain truth. Then let them recollect, that almost all great discoveries have been accompanied by a great deal of quackery and imposture. Let them think how much these investigations

might tend to promote medical science. Let them reflect how important a thing it is to investigate the value of testimony. Let them further reflect what a world of mystery we live in. Now look at the powers of memory. It is not too much to say, that if the records of memory, even of a peasant, were written out in full, the weight alone of the ink would probably be greater than the weight of the brain that remembers. After this, can they say that any process of the human mind is astonishing? There are numbers of statements, apparently well authenticated, in which it appears that the last thoughts and wishes of a dying person have had great influence over relatives and friends, divided from these dying persons by large distances of land and sea. Let us carefully record and examine into all these statements. It would be an unutterable comfort to many minds to have it well ascertained that there was any influence after death of one mind upon another.

But I do not rest my case upon these high metaphysical grounds. I rest it upon three other grounds. First, that in investigating these so-called spiritual phenomena, we should ascertain more about the laws of evidence ; secondly, that we should ascertain whether

there are any powers, forces, or influences, of which we are at present not aware, that have their place in the creation ; and, thirdly, whether disease brings into operation faculties of hearing, eyesight, or imagination, of which we have at present no adequate conception, medically, morally, metaphysically, or scientifically. These questions demand the most careful investigation from our best weighers of evidence, and from our most accomplished scientific men.



THE greatest perplexity in contemplating life is seeing of how little account is the individual, and what small pity or provision Nature seems to have made for his sufferings. It seems such a world of caprice. Think of the difference of suffering endured by the man or woman who had to undergo a severe operation twenty years ago, from that which any person having to undergo a similar operation suffers now. And yet the former sufferer might have been quite as good a man as the present one. Think of the treatment of fever cases in past times. Think of what reputed witches and wizards must have suffered, and of the

torments that heretics endured. But there is no need to contrast the present with the past. Now-a-days there is just the same horrible inequality in the fortunes of individuals. One is a pet, and the other a victim, without any apparent reason.

There is the same thing in the lower creation. Think of the difference between the conditions of the Arabian horse—the pet of the family, in old age never ill-treated—and of the horse that comes under the tender mercies of the vivisectioning French veterinary surgeon; of the butterfly that is pinned by a collector, and of the butterfly which finishes its existence in its own happy butterfly manner; of the cat which is the joint property of three school-boys, and of the cat that is the darling of one elderly lady. There is certainly a considerable difference in the conditions of men, animals, birds, and insects, not by any means resulting from their own peculiar qualities or merits.

The only ray of comfort is to have a belief and hope that there is a "solidarity" of interest, as the French would say, throughout the universe. We know so little of the Divine government, that we may not unreasonably indulge ourselves in such hopes and beliefs. And then

these martyrs—it is a grand expression, “The noble army of martyrs”—may have some reward for their martyrdom.



A VERY useful book might be written with the sole object of advising what parts of what books should be read. It should not be a book of elegant extracts, but should merely refer to the passages which are advised to be read. It might also indicate what are the chief works upon any given subject. For example, take rent; the important passages in Adam Smith, Ricardo, Jones, Mill, and other writers, should be referred to.

Of course, this work must be the product of more than one mind. I have often heard it said that when the London Library was founded, there was scarcely any work of any kind, and of any age, proposed for purchase, respecting which some member of the learned committee which formed and regulated that library, could not tell something desirable to be known about it. If the knowledge about books embodied in that committee could have been given to the world it would have been a most valuable ad-

dition to the world's knowledge. Often a great but obscure student dies without having given to it any of the results of his extensive reading.



THERE is hardly anything in which mankind is so thoughtless, so servile, and, as regards ideas, so poverty-stricken, as in ornamentation. Therein the imitative nature of the monkey comes out strongly in man: But, perhaps, the death blow was given to beauty and variety of ornament when once the system of moulding was invented. This, of course, suits men's indolence, as similar ornaments, if ornaments they can be called, may be turned out by the thousand with but little trouble and at small expense.



IAM one of those who think that lectures are a great means of advancing knowledge for the human race. As regards the improvement of agriculture, it may be observed that there are no people so conservative as agriculturists, and so adverse to adopting any new thing. Now there are men, a few only, who have studied

agriculture very profoundly. I do not think that they could make a better use of their knowledge and their time, than by going about the country, and giving agricultural lectures. There is not one person in a thousand who understands the principles of drainage, and how the capillary system acts in it. The agricultural lecturer would at first have to lecture to a small and most sceptical audience. But the good seed would have been sown; and some amongst his audience would have received ideas which they could not easily get rid of, and which they would gradually test by practical experience.



NO doubt all knowledge is good, and will eventually prove serviceable to the world. But, speaking for myself—if I had been consulted first—if it had rested with me to decide—I think I should have voted against the invention of the electric telegraph. It appears to me that the electric telegraph chiefly serves to convey the news of misfortune rapidly, inaccurately, abruptly, and partially. We have now the fifth act of the tragedy before we know anything of the preceding ones. Then, again, the system of telegraphing tends more and more

to divide official men into two classes—idiots and madmen. The facility for conveying concentrated information and asking for immediate instructions, gradually dwarfs the mental powers and activity of the subordinate in the distance ; while the principal man at home is driven into madness by never having a sure moment of peace.



THERE was some talk in a company of men of experience about mis-statements, and how they should be dealt with. It arose thus. One said, " There is a title of a Spanish newspaper which always amuses me—*El Clamor Publico*—it is such an honest title."

Then there was talk about false rumours and mis-statements generally, when some one said, " The question of refuting false statements has always seemed very difficult to me. I have gone through several phases of opinion about it. When I was very young in office, I remember a minister being very much abused in the newspapers for having done, as it was supposed, a base and mean thing. Now, he was quite innocent. He had not done that thing, but, 'quite other,' as Mr. Carlyle would say ; and I

knew this, having docketed the correspondence. One day I had to wait upon the minister to get some papers signed, and so I ventured to say to him, being in a state of much indignation myself, 'How can you, my lord, suffer these scandalous things to be said about you? You know, of course, that I know how utterly false they are.' 'You are an excellent fellow,' said the good-humoured minister to me, 'and it is very kind of you to take such an interest in my reputation. But you are young, my dear boy—very young. When you have come to my time of life, and have been as much abused as I have been, you will endure these things as patiently as I do.'

"'But the truth, my lord—the truth! Is it not always desirable that the truth should be known?' You see I was very young at the time.

"'Well, now,' he said, 'I'll convince you that I am right. Suppose I were to answer this thing, which I can answer, then in a few weeks there comes some other attack, and I cannot answer it. I may be equally innocent; but my duty to my colleagues, my duty to the public service, my anxiety to preserve amicable relations with foreign governments, absolutely prevent my giving a complete explanation. Then the world cries out: 'He answered *that*,

he cannot answer *this*; of course *this* is true.' No, my dear fellow, you are young in the public service. You do not know that every public man should be pachydermatous. I am.'

"I went away silenced, but not convinced."

I have often told this story before; but I think it is a valuable one, and I do not fear to repeat it.

Then said another: "Let me tell my story. I, too, was very young; but it did happen that I had to take a leading part on one of the great questions of the day. The part that I took was unpopular; and thundering articles were written against me. I was perfectly right, as the event proved. There was no merit in that, for it was my business to understand the subject in question thoroughly; but before the event took place I was very miserable. To tell the truth, I thought I was ruined as a public man. I prepared an elaborate answer to the attacks upon me. I was one day in my study hard at work at my refutation, when an editor of one of our greatest publications called upon me. 'What are you about?' he said; 'I see you are in a state of great agitation.' 'I'm answering these fellows,' I replied. 'I assure you I have a perfectly good case.'

"'I dare say you have,' replied the great

editor; 'but do you think any editor is fool enough to allow himself to be answered in his own newspaper?'

"The remark, coming from an editor, was convincing, and I stayed my hand."

"Well, now, let me tell my story," said another. "I had a friend, a most learned man, a great philosopher; and he had fallen out with some philosophic system. If I recollect rightly, it was the Hegelian system. He published his big book. I did not read the book, but I read an elaborate review of it, in which the man was stated to be a disciple of Hegel."

"Shortly afterwards I met my friend in the street. 'How long is it,' I said, 'since you have changed your mind, and have become a disciple of Hegel?'

"'The rascals!' he replied. 'In my first forty pages I thought it right to explain the Hegelian doctrine. They only read those forty pages, and did not look at my refutation. I wrote and explained to them the state of the case. They replied to me that criticism was a matter of opinion. They had their opinion, I might have mine.'"

"Now I must tell my story," said a fourth. "I saw the other day that a statement I had publicly made was declared to be inaccurate.

Now, if there is anything I pride myself upon, it is being accurate. I had rather be called a scoundrel than an inaccurate man. Home I go, planning, as I walk, a complete answer to this attack. But when I arrive at home, I find grave domestic matters awaiting me. My little daughter's favourite canary bird is seriously ill ; and I am imperatively required to attend to the case. After much pondering over it, having summoned all my ignorance to my aid, I prescribe a warm bath, and I have to superintend the operation. Moreover, Juno, my pet pointer, the best pointer, I believe, in the world, has met with an accident. Worst of all, old Nurse Broadwood, who lives in the neighbouring village, is worse to-day, and thinks it would do her good, I hear, if young Master George were to come and see her. You would not perhaps think it, but " young Master George " is the slightly bald, somewhat rotund, and decidedly middle-aged gentleman who has the honour, at the present moment, of addressing you. These cares and troubles absorb my mind. The next day I am determined I will write the refutation. The next day, however, brings its own cares and duties with it. The day after that, I say to myself, ' I don't care so much about this thing ; but for the sake of the public, I will answer it some day.' On the

fourth day, I am quite cool and indifferent about the matter, and say to myself, 'The public will not care a bit more about it than I do.'

It may be noticed that in each of these instances, from some reason or other, a misstatement was left uncontradicted.

"Now," said another person in the company, "I am going to put before you a great idea. Let us set up a refutation paper, which shall occupy itself solely in refuting the errors, falsehoods, calumnies, lies, and unjust criticisms, put forth in the course of the week. Oh! you say, it would never sell. I think it would. The victims would form a large body of buyers. But, at any rate, it would be a curious experiment. Let us try it."

"No," said another, "let us get some well-known paper to devote a portion of its space solely to these refutations. That appears a more feasible scheme; and this part of the paper might really be made very interesting."

We all thought that this scheme was the best; and here the conversation ended.



IT has been a favourite fancy of imaginative men, to picture to themselves the persons whom they would like to have known.

And they generally name historical personages, or men of literary renown—such as Dr. Johnson, Milton, Cromwell, Charles I., Queen Elizabeth, Roger Bacon, or Alfred the Great. My fancy runs most amidst the great obscure. I should like to have known the man who first ventured to leave off wearing his pigtail. What a great man he must have been ! The pigtail possessed every feature of folly which costume can present. It was ugly, inconvenient, ridiculous ; it took up time, it spoilt clothes ; it needed assistance. Think of a regiment having their pigtails arranged under the inspection of the prudent captain late at night, in order that his regiment might be the earliest ready for battle, or parade, on the ensuing morning !

What heaps of calumny must have been piled upon the man who first left off his pigtail ! If he had a wife, the neighbours doubtless said that he beat her ; if he had children, that he starved them ; and all agreed that he was an atheist. In moments of depression, and they must have been frequent, how fervently he wished that he had never dismissed his pig-tail ! But there is no returning in such a course, and to have taken to the pigtail again would not have condoned the original offence. With the deep insight into things which misery gives, he no

doubt often said to himself, "Better conform to the foolishness of human follies, than be ever so wise, but withal so lonely in the world." Thus he went, staggering under his burthen of eccentricity, sometimes morbidly courageous, sometimes morbidly timid and shamefaced; now thinking himself a presumptuous idiot, and now a glorious martyr; but never again enjoying that sweet peace which abides with common-placedness.

We have many pigtailed now—moral, physical, metaphysical, and theological. But woe to the man who makes a first appearance in broad daylight without his pigtail! Yes: I should like to have known the man who first left off the pigtail of hair. Depend upon it, he had most of the qualities which rendered the great personages above-named famous in literature or in history.



WHEN people talk of women's claims, and women's rights, I think of the tournaments of former days. If the ladies had descended into the arena, most of them would have made but sorry knights; whereas, remaining in the gallery, it was they who gave the

prizes; and it was to win the meed of praise from them that each knight did his best. There is something of the same kind even in the most unchivalrous ages.



OBERVE a dog or a cat turning and twisting about, and perhaps, beating with its paws before it can make up its mind to lie down even upon the softest cushion. This, naturalists tell us, is a reminiscence of its former state when a wild animal, and when it had to make its bed for itself. Thousands of years of domesticity have not obliterated this habit derived from its ancestors, the dwellers in the forest. See the force of ancestry. There is, doubtless, the same thing to be seen in the ways and habits of men; and probably his most distant ancestors still live, in some extent, in each individual man.



THE common notion about the springing of a serpent is mistaken. Those who have watched the creature say that it gradually uncoils itself before it makes its spring. So

it is with most calamities and disasters. There is generally time to do something to avert or avoid them ; but we are fascinated by the sense of danger, and watch the uncoiling without doing anything to help ourselves.



IT is very significant to observe in speeches delivered in parliament, that the greatest orators speaking on the most interesting subject, cannot keep up the interest and attention of their audience the moment that they begin to read out a quotation. What an argument this is for extemporary preaching !



I THINK that men might be taught oratory. Not as Lord Brougham would have taught it. No man will become an orator by studying his Demosthenes ; and, indeed, models of eloquence are of next to no use, for every man must create his own form of eloquence.

But there are certain rules of general application which would go far to ensure success in public speaking.

Of course I presume that the man has some-

critic, or as an advocate, or as a judge. Now all these characters may afterwards be fairly taken up ; but the first thing is to listen, if I may say so, out of character—to be a *bond fide* listener, and nothing more. This requires some of the simplicity of greatness. It indicates the existence, too, of that respect which really great men have for other men, and for truth. In short, I maintain that it takes a great man to make a good listener.



ONE of the best modes of dwarfing the influence of clever men in state affairs, is to keep all salaries very low. If a Machiavelli were consulted by a rich aristocracy as to the best plan for securing power to themselves, I think he would reply somewhat after this fashion : " Tarquin signified what he meant by cutting off the heads of the tallest poppies : I say, starve them at the roots, so that they may droop their heads and be of no account with anybody." Then dropping metaphor, for Machiavellis are not fond of indulging in metaphors, he would add, " You can do this under the pretence of economy, and so ingratiate yourselves with the populace, while you suppress those who might be troublesome rivals to you."

THERE is something animal about decisiveness. If the mind be a fine and discursive mind, inclined to thought, and stored with knowledge, it must be hard for it to be swiftly decisive. One of the main qualifications for decisiveness is to be able to shut your eyes to all manner of minor considerations, and sometimes even of major considerations. To do this requires courage, which is an animal virtue, that can be much enlarged by practice.

Let us take a numerical illustration, showing the rough and ready way in which decisions are arrived at by the neglect of minor considerations. Let there be eight considerations of the following values: No. one, value seventeen; No. two, value nine; and then six others, the values of which are not ascertained, but it is reasonably to be concluded that no one of them is higher than four.

A decisive man sees that if he decides in a particular way, he will have on his side No. one, equal to seventeen. He sees that No. two will be against him. He has not time (it is, perhaps, on the field of battle) to ascertain to which side the other six will incline. He assumes, however, that they will be evenly balanced; he knows that the highest value of

any of them is only four ; and he takes at once the decision which will be supported by consideration No. one, value seventeen.

Of course no man thinks so pedantically, as, for the purpose of illustration, I have supposed him to do in the foregoing instance. But it may serve to illustrate the mode of thinking adopted by decisive men, and to show how they are often right.

Had there been time for looking carefully at each of the eight unascertained considerations, it might have turned out that the smaller considerations would have entirely altered the decision. The man, not practised in decisiveness, cannot bear, even at a moment of peril, to overlook this possibility.



THEY say that every man is his own worst enemy. I do not know how this may be ; but I am certain that he is his own most dangerous competitor.

All that he has ever done is sure to be brought up against a man, in some way or other, when he does anything new. If it is different, people say that he had better have kept to his old style, for there is a profound belief in common

minds, as Sir Walter Scott has observed, that no man can do two different kinds of things equally well. If what he does is of a similar character to that which he has done before, then all his past merits are brought up against him ; and he is sure to be compared most disadvantageously with his former self. At last he almost hates that former self as being his bitterest and most provoking rival. He is like a man who has married a widow, and is always hearing about the merits of the " dear departed."

I can imagine a man who had lived a very long and very active life, and who had done much either in writing, speaking, or in action, being absolutely suppressed by his former self when he undertakes any new thing. He would be crushed under the weight of his old laurels, which all men would conspire to heap upon him.

It was a vulgar way of getting rid of Aristides, to ostracize him. His Athenian friends, by constantly bringing up, and dwelling only upon, his *past* merits and services, might easily have driven him into exile, to find a recognition of his present merits in some other state.



REGARDING one day, in company with a humorous friend, a noble vessel of a somewhat novel construction, sailing slowly out of port, he observed, "What a quantity of cold water somebody must have had down his back!" In my innocence I supposed that he alluded to the wet work of the artizans who had been building the vessel; but when I came to know him better, I found that this was the form of comment he always indulged in, when contemplating any new and great work, and that his somebody was the designer of the vessel. My friend had carefully studied the art of discouragement, and there was a class of men whom he designated simply as "cold water pourers." It was most amusing to hear him describe the lengthened sufferings of the man who first designed a wheel; of him who first built a boat; and of the adventurous personage who first proposed the daring enterprise of using buttons, instead of fishes' bones, to fasten the scanty raiment of some savage tribe. Warming with his theme, he would become quite eloquent in describing the long career of discouragement which these rash men had brought upon themselves, and which he said, to his knowledge, must have shortened all their lives. He invented imaginary

dialogues between the unfortunate inventor, say of the wheel, and his particular friend, some eminent cold-water pourer. For, as he said, every man has some such friend, who fascinates him by fear, and to whom he confides his enterprises in order to hear the worst that can be said of them.

The sayings of the chilling friend probably, as he observed, ran thus:—

“We seem to have gone on very well for thousands of years without this rolling thing. Your father carried burdens on his back. The king is content to be borne on men’s shoulders. The high priest is not too proud to do the same. Indeed, I question whether it is not irreligious to attempt to shift from men’s shoulders their natural burdens.

“Then, as to its succeeding,—for my part, I see no chance of that. How can it go up hill? How is one to stop it, going down? How often you have failed before in other fanciful things of the same nature! Besides, you are losing your time; and the yams about your hut are only half-planted. You will be a beggar; and it is my duty, as a friend, to tell you so plainly. There was Nang-chung: what became of him? We had found fire for ages, in a proper way, taking a proper time about it, by rubbing two

sticks together. He must needs strike out fire at once, with iron and flint ; and did he die in his bed ? Our sacred lords saw the impiety of that proceeding, and very justly impaled the man who imitated heavenly powers. And, even if you could succeed with this new and absurd rolling thing, the state would be ruined. What would become of those who now carry burdens on their backs ? Put aside the vain fancies of a childish mind, and finish the planting of your yams."

No one who had not heard my ingenious friend throw himself into the part of the first objector, can well imagine how much there is to be said against the invention of forks. The proposed invention was impious, troublesome, unclean, unnecessary, and ludicrous. Besides, it was impossible, by reason of its difficulty ; and, if it were possible, it would be most dangerous. It was putting a ready weapon into every angry man's hands, when the juice of the grape is mounting into men's heads ; and it would mount into the heads even of the wisest. Who could answer for the deaths that would ensue from these dangerous weapons being always close at hand ? There could be no blessing on a meal that was to be eaten with forks. They had had a famine last year, when

two million Celestials died in anguish. What would happen the year after forks should come into use? Not that they could be used; for it would take a lifetime to learn how to use them. Then, what was to become of the four great Tang-rang ceremonials, which all depended upon the meat being taken, bit by bit, in due succession, between the thumb and each of the several fingers? How was the Celestial monarch to show his world-astounding favour to a wisely-controlling minister, when that royal personage could not take between his thumb and his little finger a boiled bird's-nest, and for ever irradiate with joy the statesman, by throwing it into his mouth, held open reverently? The thing could not be; and he who should endeavour to invent such a machine as a fork, was an idiot, a hater of men, a parricide, cousin of a dead dog, and a despiser of all ceremonials. Finally, what would his aunt, widow of the great Ling-Pe, say? a wise lady, who had known all the sacred usages of old, and who had seven rice-fields and three-and-twenty slaves to bequeath. Thus the invention of forks was stopped in China.

My humorous friend was wont to say, that thus, too, several fork inventors in various countries had been quelled, until the wicked

idea entered into a man who had no aunt, and then forks were invented; but he, the inventor, was justly burnt alive.

It is really very curious to observe how, even in modern times, the arts of discouragement prevail. There are men, whose sole pretence to wisdom consists in administering discouragement. They are never at a loss. They are equally ready to prophesy, with wonderful ingenuity, all possible varieties of misfortune to any enterprise that is proposed; and, when the thing is produced, and has met with some success, to find a flaw in it. I once saw a work of art produced in the presence of an eminent cold-water pourer. He did not deny that it was beautiful; but he instantly fastened upon a small crack in it, that nobody had observed; and upon that crack he would dilate, whenever the work was discussed in his presence. Indeed, he did not see the work, but only the crack in it. That flaw, that little flaw, was all in all to him.

The cold-water pourers are not all of one form of mind. Some are led to indulge in this recreation from genuine timidity. They really do fear that all new attempts will fail. Others are simply envious and ill-natured. Then, again, there is a sense of power and wisdom in pro-

phesying evil. Moreover, it is the safest thing to prophesy, for hardly anything at first succeeds exactly in the way that it was intended to succeed.

Again, there is the lack of imagination which gives rise to the utterance of so much discouragement. For an ordinary man, it must have been a great mental strain to grasp the ideas of the first projectors of steam and gas, electric telegraphs, and pain-deadening chloroform. The inventor is always, in the eyes of his fellow-men, somewhat of a madman; and often they do their best to make him so.

Again, there is the want of sympathy; and that is, perhaps, the ruling cause in most men's minds who have given themselves up to discourage. They are not tender enough, or sympathetic enough, to appreciate all the pain they are giving, when, in a dull plodding way, they lay out argument after argument to show that the project which the poor inventor has set his heart upon, and upon which, perhaps, he has staked his fortune, will not succeed.

But what inventors suffer is but a small part of what mankind in general endure from thoughtless and unkind discouragement. Those high-souled men belong to the suffering class, and must suffer; but it is in daily life that the

wear and tear of discouragement tell so much. Propose, not a great invention, but a small party of pleasure, to an apt discourager (and there is generally one in most households), and see what he will make of it. It soon becomes sicklied over with doubt and despondency ; and, at last, the only hope of the proposer is, that his proposal, when realized, will not be an ignominious failure. All hope of pleasure, at least for him, the proposer, has long been out of the question.



THERE is a very peculiar form of criticism prominent, if not predominant, in the present day. Formerly, there were very unjust and slashing criticisms. There were also very hearty, praiseful criticisms. But it was left to our times to develop a form of criticism which should be a quiet, studiously-devised, continuous denigration, and which should balance its praise and blame in the same sentence with a certain skill, always contriving, however, that the blame should ultimately predominate. The writers who indulge in this kind of criticism will say of a statesman, an author, or an artist, something of this kind—"The object which he has

aimed at, were it worth aiming at, has certainly, to some small extent, been attained. But the methods by which he has attained it are illusory, illogical, and often absurd. There was a young man mentioned by Jeremy Taylor, who threw a stone at a dog, and hit his cruel stepmother, whereupon he said 'that though he had intended it otherwise, it was not altogether lost.' We may say of our author that, if he has been more fortunate than this young man, he has also been less fortunate. It would certainly have shown more good sense and good taste to have missed his aim than to have attained it ; but we must confess that he has in some measure attained it." Their parentheses, as you will observe, are always injurious, their qualifications depreciatory, and their summing-up condemnatory. The man criticized feels that he has not much to lay hold of. Did they not say that he had attained his object ? But all the time the poor man feels that an unpleasant creature of the snail species has crawled over his work, and left its slime behind it. If he cares about such things at all, and there are few men who do not care, he feels humiliated, discouraged, and depressed ; but he has very little tangible ground for a grievance.

The men who write these criticisms have

seldom done anything themselves. Doing is not their forte. They would, however, effect a great deal of mischief, and would bring on a Byzantine period in statesmanship, in letters, and in arts; but that, fortunately, the busy, energetic world is too strong for them; and the workers go on working, and never minding, except for the moment. After all, the world recognizes true work; and though it is amused with this kind of denigration, does not really believe in it.



THE ant is a most satirical creature, as may be seen by the quantity of formic* acid it secretes, which is only latent criticism.

It was a rainy day; and a community of ants had blocked up all the avenues to their nest. Now the ant, though very industrious, is also very fond of amusement, and holds with Aristotle that "the object of labour is to procure leisure." So, after having seen to the

* The printer in the first proof, put the word *forensic* instead of *formic*. All authors must have noticed that what are called printers' mistakes are often only a subtle expression of wit on the part of the printers, which, to vary a monotonous occupation, they cannot help indulging in, even at some trouble to themselves.

comfort of their wives and their babies—for the ant is very affectionate, as is the case with many satirical creatures—the males of the nest sat down in a lower room to have some good conversation. A frequent subject with the ants is afforded by the goings-on of men, which they view with considerable contempt; and this subject they dilated upon at some length on the present occasion. As is well known to those who have studied the ways of ants, they interchange thought by means of touching one another with their antennæ. A bitter old ant had touched off many satirical things about men, as regards their religion, their polity, and especially their social arrangements. "There are plenty of paupers among men," he said; "but there is no such thing as a pauper ant. We understand how to provide for every member of our community."

In every company there is generally found some one who, for the sake of contradiction and from the love of argument, takes the unpopular side. A clever youth amongst the ants touched his neighbour's antennæ, to the following effect. He intimated, with some signs of disapproval from the rest of the company, that there was a great deal of similarity, after all, between men and ants. They build nests, we build nests;

they are masons, we are masons; they are carpenters, we are carpenters; they keep cows, we keep cows; they make wars, we make wars; they take slaves, we take slaves,—and so on. To this the bitter old ant replied, that men were not good to eat, and therefore he did not see why they had been created. They were great, heavy, clumsy creatures, and all their arts of life had been borrowed from them, the ants.

“At any rate,” responded the younger ant, “they are like us in that they can communicate their ideas to one another, if it be but by horrid noises resembling the barking of dogs.”

The old ant touched off a triumphant reply, bringing in Providence, as people often do when they want to say a very severe thing. He said, or rather intimated by a very pregnant touch, that this noise which men were obliged to make, in order to convey their ideas to one another, was a signal proof of their inferiority, and of their paucity of ideas. A kind Providence, seeing how few ideas they have to communicate, had given them this slow, but upon that account beneficent, way of conveying their ideas. He, the present toucher, had known from a friend of his, an ant who lived under the flooring in one of their talking nests, that a man would make a noise for three hours to convey only two ideas.

Each ant touched his neighbour with laughter, and the whole company laughed so obstreperously that the female ants ran down from the upper chambers to learn what was the matter.

Thus it may be seen how the greatest gifts, even the gift of speech, may be depreciated ; and it also may be observed what extraordinary powers have been conferred even upon what we call inferior creatures—powers which, in any state of being, we can hardly imagine to be conferred upon ourselves.



THERE are, I think, more good words to be said against Competition than for it. No doubt, it is a great incentive to exertion ; but there its function for good begins and ends. It is no friend to Love ; and is first-cousin, with no removes, to Envy. Then it deranges and puts quite out of place the best motives for exertion. " Read your book because that other boy is reading his, and you will be beaten in the contest with him, if you do not take care." Such is the motive that competition administers, but it says nothing about learning being a good thing for itself. Consequently, when the com-

petitors are parted, the book is apt to drop out of the hand of him *who chiefly used it as a storehouse of weapons.*

Then, again, when education has been greatly built upon motives of competition, excellence is made too much of, and moderate proficiency is sadly discouraged. A very injurious effect is thus produced upon the mind of the person who has been used to compete. He, or she, thinks, "If I am not everything, I am nothing," and declines to sing, or to play, or to draw, or to go on with some accomplishment, because it has been ascertained by competition and examination, at a certain time of life, that other people could do better. The world loses a great deal by this ; and, moreover, it is by no means certain that inferiority in anything, at one time of life, precludes excellence in that same thing at another time of life.

Competition, however, will not cease to be urgently employed as a motive, indeed as the first motive, until the mass of mankind become real Christians—an event which does not seem likely to happen in our time. The practical object, therefore, is to see what limits and restraints can be applied to competition. I should propose three :—

1. Do not apply it to the very young, for two

reasons. In the first place, experience shows that, for the mere acquisition of knowledge, it does not answer to work the brain early ; and that children who are somewhat let alone as regards learning, surpass the others when the proper time for diligent study comes. I do not pretend to define this time : that is a matter upon which those only, who are skilled in education, can pronounce.

The second reason is, that it is well, morally speaking, to let children get the habit of regarding their fellows as friends and playmates rather than as rivals.

2. Never apply competition as a motive in a family. Looked at in the most business-like and worldly way, it does not pay. Let us take a familiar and domestic instance, for abstract talk, though it sounds grandly, seldom leads to much result. A father has two sons, James and Charles. James is always down in time for breakfast : Charley is apt to be late. Let the father praise and encourage James for his early rising, but not in Charley's presence. And let him (the father) administer good advice, or blame, to Charley, in the matter of early rising, without saying one word about Jamesie's merits, or holding him up as a model to be followed—and disliked. It is far more important for the

family interests that Charley's love for Jamesie should not be diminished in the least, than that he should be incited, by competition with his brother, to get up early. That splendid copy-book saying—I wonder who first said it? It must have been the eighth wise man of Greece—*Comparisons are odious*—is especially true in domestic life. And the most unpleasant and dangerous comparisons are always brought out to incite to competition.

3. If, for purposes of education, you must, at some period of life, have earnest, I would almost say, fierce competition, at any rate let it be as little individual as possible. Let the object for a youth be, to get into a certain class, not to beat a certain other youth or youths. The riding school seems to furnish a good model. Put a bar up, and say, "All those that leap over this shall be considered good horsemen;" and then the youths who do succeed in leaping over it, will congratulate one another, and have a feeling of pleasant companionship, rather than of bitter rivalry, with each other. You may have as many bars as you like, of different heights, in order to test different degrees of excellence in horsemanship; but do not inquire too curiously into the exact merits of each individual rider, and seek to put him in what

you may call his proper place. That will be found out soon enough, when they all come to ride across country—the difficult country of public or professional life.

After the foregoing illustrations, which are of a very homely character, it may seem a somewhat abrupt transition to revert to religious considerations. But I cannot conclude this short essay without remarking that competition is not a thing much encouraged in the Best of Books and by the Divinest of Teachers. There is a command—the great command—about loving one another, but none about competing with one another. Yes; perhaps there is (at any rate an implied command), to compete for the lower place.



THERE are two or three marked peculiarities in the vice of calumny. In the first place, considering the mischief it does, there is very little punishment to the person practising it. Personal vices are dearly paid for, even in this world; and most of us learn, through bitter experience, and by dire remorse, the sin and mischief of our wrong-doings.

Then, there is the thorough ignorance, for the

most part, on the part of the calumniator, of the mischief and the misery that he causes by calumny. A good easy man, or one who believes himself to be such, may have been a steady propagator of injurious reports deeply affecting other people; and the poor man goes to his grave in the confident belief that he has been a most exemplary member of society. The most unfortunate fact about calumny is, that you seldom witness the sufferings you create by calumniating. Your other cruelties you know about, and often see the issue of them; but the agonies you cause by every form of calumny, detraction, disparagement, and erroneous statement, rarely come to your knowledge, or to the knowledge of any human being, except the person who is calumniated.

A certain humourist is wont to contend that the sum of misery in human life is always the same. He says the sum of forces in the material world is always the same, the quantity of motion is always the same, and so is the amount of human misery. It is in vain that you urge against him that everything has become milder in the world; that wars are conducted with less cruelty and less destruction of property; that religious persecution has, comparatively speaking, ceased to exist; that there is an

immense advance in medical skill ; and that, generally, humanity is in the ascendant. He is pleased to admit your statements ; but contends that all these good things are counterbalanced by more sensitiveness on the part of the human race, and by their caring more and more for what is said and written about them ; and also that there is so much more talking and so much more writing. In short, he maintains that the progress of calumny, and the severity with which it is felt, will always counteract any advantages that are gained for the human race.

A strange thing, too, he observes, is this—that the less truth there is in the calumny, the greater are the sufferings of the person calumniated. “ You would think,” he says, “ that when a man hears that something has been said or written of him that does not apply to him, any more than it would to the inhabitant of another planet, he would not take the calumny to heart. But no : this only makes him more furious and more vexed. If it did apply, he could then bear it, as he should deserve it ; and so in this case the pointless arrow inflicts the severest wound.”

Moralists have exhausted their energies in denouncing the vices of detraction and backbiting. With the exception of St. Paul's grand words about charity—which embrace the whole sub-

ject—perhaps the most practical remarks that have been made upon it are those which have been made by the writer who goes by the name of Thomas à Kempis. After denouncing the evil of uttering injurious statements known to be false, which, however, is comparatively rare, he goes on to say that you should not soon pour out to the ears of others those injurious reports even that you do believe. “*Nec audita, vel credita, mox ac aliorum aures effundere.*”



OVER particularity, or even reasonable particularity, in trifles causes a great deal of social discomfort and restraint. The man who, to use a common phrase, wishes a thing to be “just so,” and not otherwise, is generally somewhat of a nuisance. People are for the most part very good-natured in these matters, and very anxious to please others; and they will make a great effort to satisfy the person who wishes to have things “just so.” But they do not, on that account, love him, or her, the more. For any person to be thoroughly popular and liveable with, there should be a little touch of untidiness and unpreciseness, and indifference to small things.

An unpunctual person is often very selfish, and causes much trouble and vexation; but, still, *cæteris paribus*, he is generally more liked than a punctual person.

The rigid Pitt is not so much beloved as the careless, easy-going Fox. This is very wrong, of course, but it cannot be helped; for, as Artemus Ward has well said, "After all, there is a great deal of human nature in man."



FOR people who are of that eager spirit that they must contend with something, or somebody, there are always the great men of former days to contend with, and, if possible, to surpass: and also, there is nature to be wrestled with, who will not yield her "open secrets" without much compulsion, and who is an antagonist always at hand, offering full scope for our utmost energy and mettle.



IN a company of learned men there was talk about posthumous fame. Some said that it was a strong motive to exertion with many per-

sons. Others maintained that its potency as a motive was very small indeed, except with a few half-crazy people, like Alexander the Great. All agreed that it was a foolish motive as applied to the mass of men, because anything that was worthy of the name of "fame" was unattainable for them.

A man writes an elaborate work upon a learned subject. In a few years' time, another man writes an elaborate work upon the same learned subject, and is kind enough to allude to the former author in a foot-note. Twenty or thirty years afterwards, this second man's work is also absorbed in a similar manner; and his labours, too, are chronicled in a foot-note. Now, the first man's fame, if you come to look at it carefully, is but small. His labours are kindly alluded to in a foot-note of a work which is also kindly alluded to in a foot-note of a work published forty or fifty years hence.

Surely this *fame in a foot-note* is not much worth having.

Then take the fame of a soldier—of any but the few distinguished generals whose names may be numbered on your fingers. Take the officer who is mentioned in a despatch. It is no doubt a great thing for him in the present day to be so mentioned; but fifty years hence, nobody

will know anything about the battle, much less about the despatch, except that it was a battle lost or won by a certain general. It is a great chance if the name of the principal general on each side is remembered by the same person.

Surely the fame to be gained by having one's name thus embalmed in a despatch is scarcely worth the loss of a limb, to say nothing about the risk of one's life.



ONE of the few things which give one a high opinion of the world, is its splendid favouritism. This man may leap over a ditch, when he ought to have kept on the hither side of it : he may run, instead of walk, when walking is the proper thing : he may even be caught munching apples in his neighbour's orchard—I speak metaphorically—and the world declines to see that he has done anything wrong. It puts up its telescope to its blind eye, because he is a favourite.

Then there is that man, who shall always have the right quantity of starch in his shirt-collar ; shall obey all the nine rules of propriety ; and shall be of, apparently, unimpeachable virtue : yet the world, though it would not say so

openly for the world, thinks him an ass, a pedant, and, perhaps even, a thoroughly bad fellow. Just let him, in a weak moment, disobey only one of the nine rules of propriety, and see how soon the world will be down upon him, for he is not a favourite.

Some of our Transatlantic cousins (that most thoughtful man, Emerson, for instance) would, doubtless, explain this phenomenon by talking of the "over-soul," or some such great affair; but, at any rate, the phenomenon indicates that there is something which looms larger in the minds of men than the outer aspect of a man or his doings, or even their own forms, and rules, and proprieties, which yet they pretend to set such store by. That "something" is probably a great, fertile, and sympathetic nature in the favourite, which is perceived by all men, and heartily, though often but secretly, appreciated by them.

The famous Duke of Buckingham always seems to me to afford the best type of a favourite, having been a person of such a winning nature that his influence was equally potent with two men of such different characters as James the First and Charles the First—the one, moreover, being the reigning monarch, and the other the heir-apparent, two personages that are seldom inclined to favour the same person.

EVERYBODY, who is fond of investigating character, seeks for tests. Now, there are tests which, at first sight, seem to be good, but are really worth nothing. You may search for ever, and be for ever wrong, to find the crucial test of a man's character in his choice of a wife, of a house, of furniture, even of his friends, or of any of his many surroundings, for that which surrounds a man is not necessarily sympathetic with him. Tests of this kind fail, because of the influence of circumstances, which influence you can seldom eliminate.

Take, for instance, his friends. Friendship is often the result of the merest accident. One cannot but have some liking for one's school-fellows and college companions, whether they are especially suitable to one or not ; and, indeed, throughout life, friendship depends much upon vicinity.

To find a certain test, you must have something that assuredly proceeds from the man himself—something that he says, or does, when freed from the influence of others, and when least controlled by circumstances. Authors are far better understood than other men, because they cannot help betraying their real thoughts and

opinions, as, when they write, they often forget who they are, with whom they live, and even what is expected of them.

In minor matters, it is often easy to find a good test. For example, if you want to ascertain what is to be ascertained of the character of a man from his style, open his book anywhere, and you are nearly sure to discern at once the peculiarities of his style. He never can conceal them.

If a man means to do a thing, and does not do it, you have a sure test. To take writing, again, as an instance : you can see that in such a sentence a man meant to do something forcible and telling, and to produce a great effect ; but, perhaps, it is merely fine writing or bombast. You have at once a measure of the man's powers in that direction.

What he blames, what he praises, are good tests of his character. What he plays at, what he laughs at, are still better tests. All serious work is, to a certain extent, compulsory ; but gamesomeness and laughter are, for the most part, involuntary. The serious beaver is always building his house ; but, in that constant work of his, shows no peculiarity of beaver character.



IT is better, in some respects, to be admired by those with whom you live, than to be loved by them. And this, not on account of any gratification of vanity, but because admiration is so much more tolerant than love. If you are admired by those who surround you, you have little to explain, or to justify. They are prone to believe in you. And this makes the wheels of life go very smoothly with you. Of course love often infers admiration; but there are many instances in which the two things are utterly dissevered.



IF superior beings regard the world, and are curious in the observation of character, how few instances they will be able to discern of any vice, or virtue, or quality being thoroughly carried out! There certainly have been some splendid specimens of consistent cruelty amongst mankind, such as Judge Jeffries. But, for the most part, the characters of men are of a mottled description. The envious man is not always envious; the jealous not always jealous; and, as for good qualities, I suppose we must own that they are seldom carried to a surpassing height. But there is one class of character, happily

not very common, which is often raised to the highest perfection in this planet.

It is difficult to describe this character by any single epithet; but it is the character of one who, wherever placed, or into whatever circumstances he may be thrown, succeeds in bringing around him an atmosphere of contradiction, contention, and vexation, which may be said to be complete.

This character has never been well drawn in fiction, for it is not a dramatic character. It does not create dramatic incidents: it causes no signal murders, nor robberies, nor disasters of any kind: it only makes a number of people miserable: it only brings into light whatever is seamy, sordid, and unpleasant in all those with whom it is brought into contact. Wherever it is, there are plenty of quarrels. It is generally in the wrong; but is, if possible, more hateful when it is in the right.

That fine line of Byron's—

“ And where he gazed, a gloom pervaded space ”

might be parodied thus:—

“ And where he gazed, a seam pervaded space.”

Everybody knows the astonishing effect that may be produced by a little canful of oil poured

upon the waters, and how a film of wondrous thinness, and yet of marvellous potency in stilling a tempest, may thus be produced. From such a character as I am describing, there emanates a subtle fluid of an exactly opposite description. I almost think that such people might have an effect upon inanimate nature ; and that if they were to talk to the Bay of Biscay, the Atlantic waves would bound in upon the shore with additional indignation, and retire from it, grating and rasping among the pebbles with an increased spitefulness and irritability.



IT is a remarkable fact, that grandeur of religious ideas does not appear to have been developed by civilisation. The three most civilised nations of antiquity were, undoubtedly, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. How poor were the religions of each of these three great nations !

The Egyptians worshipped, in the most abject manner, animals of such an inferior nature, that they have not even been chosen as emblems of chivalry ; for what knight has ever chosen a cow, or a crocodile, as a support to his shield ?

Again, to estimate the gods of Greece and

Rome, take the scene in Olympus, described at the end of the first book of Homer. Strip it of the grand language of the poet, with his many-junctured adjectives, and what a mean idea it gives one of his gods ! There is a vulgar conjugal squabble between Jupiter and Juno, the like of which may be heard any day in Ratcliffe Highway. The king of the gods even threatens to lay a heavy hand upon his queen ; whereupon her son Vulcan brings a goblet of wine to his mother, and suggests that peace may be made in this very common-place way of making-up quarrels. Then there is inextinguishable laughter at a comical circumstance which would hardly amuse the British House of Commons—namely, a lame person performing the part of cup-bearer. The affairs of Troy are forgotten ; and the evening is wound up with feast and song and jollity.

Compare these gods and their worshippers with the deities in pristine America and their worshippers. Study the noble prayers of the Mexicans ; the simple, yet splendid, worship of the Peruvians ; the noble ideas of the Great Spirit which pervaded even the humbler tribes in North America ; and, above all, note the high conception of the functions of a deity which had been formed by the greatest people in America

—the Araucans. They maintained that prayer was needless, because their gods were so beneficent, that they were sure to confer upon man all things that it was good for him to have. At the same time the Araucans showed their gratitude for this goodness by humble offerings, never touching life.

Then, again, look at India. As far as one can understand Buddhism, it may be a religion of little hope, but there is no meanness in it. Viewing all forms of life as so much separation from the deity, the Buddhist is only anxious to get creditably through the various forms of life he has to encounter, and then, as a final reward, to be for ever united with and lost in that deity.

A very different religion this from that which worshipped tricky gods and discreditable nymphs and goddesses, endowed with larger powers than those of men or women, but having a full share of all their follies and their vices.



THERE are vast hopes for mankind in the future, especially if men could only get a little spare time to look about them and to think, and if more persons could have greater

freedom for observation and for thought. It is thus that the statesman could do so much for us. It is not that he can invent, that he can observe profoundly, or think out with nicety great and difficult questions. But he can smooth the path of life for those who can do such work in the world. And what would he not do for mankind if he could let loose some of the thought which is now employed in preparation for war, in the interpretation of confused heaps of undigested law, in meeting the vexatious incidence of taxation, and, generally, in contending with needless difficulties created by men in the acquisition of the means of living!

This ought to be his main idea,—how he can render life more facile to all the people he has to govern, and so give them more time for thought, for enjoyment, and for discovery.



THERE are very irrational views about royalty in the present generation. They have put aside the notion of kings and queens governing by Divine Right, and of their being very different from other men and women. At the same time they will not allow that kings and queens are very like other men and women.

They demand from them that they should conduct their joys and sorrows in a very different manner from that of other people. The poor kings and queens are therefore in a very awkward position. They have neither the advantage of being considered to be different from other people, nor the advantage of being considered to be like other people. There is hardly any matter in which there is more necessity for tolerance and wisdom than in our appreciation of the rights, duties, and privileges of royal persons in modern times.



SO great is the love of compromise in modern times, that the highest order of men, if they be shrewd men, can hardly be distinguished from the owners of badly-managed shops in their tendency to demand terms much larger than those which they mean to accept. And thus the time of the world is squandered.



THERE has hardly ever been such an instance of important results following from the investigation of minute and apparently unimportant phenomena, as Fraunhofer's lines afford.

Who would have thought that the fact of there being some dark lines across a ray of light, when dispersed by the prism, should be the means of discovering the constitution of the stellar bodies, and should have proved with almost certainty that Sirius has a proper motion of its own to the extent of one hundred and forty millions of miles in the course of a year? Doubtless the material world is crowded with minute phenomena involving similar great results, which phenomena we pass by with unregarding eyes every day of our lives. How Lord Bacon would have rejoiced to see such a grand result as that above alluded to, of which the basis was the observation and recording of this minute phenomenon by the German optician!



“**H**E died worth so much.” Would that it could be said, He died worth so many. To “much” the proper substantive is money; to “many,” friends.

Surely the best kind of property is affection: and at any rate it is the only kind you can carry with you to the grave.



HOW charming the young would be to talk to, with their freshness, fearlessness, and truthfulness, if only, to take a metaphor from painting, they would make more use of greys and other neutral tints, instead of dabbing on so ruthlessly the strongest positives in colour! It is, however, too much to ask from them to exhibit that moderation in the use of colour which only large experience, perhaps, can inculcate.



THERE was a man very notable for sagacity, who used to say that *proportion is everything*, and who marked his approbation or disapprobation of anything, by saying that it was proportionate or disproportionate. No doubt this is a very wise maxim, but, like many of the same kind, rather too large for general application, requiring, indeed, something like infinite wisdom to apply it thoroughly.

Suppose you were to say, "That man gives a despicable amount of attention to this or that thing"—despicable, from its being too much, or too little; being, in fact, totally disproportionate. That the censure should be just, you must know the exact nature of the objects

which the man censured is capable of attaining, and the relative attention which he is capable of giving to these objects.

"The applause of listening senates to command" may not be within his compass, whereas the making artificial flies may be; and it is unjust to blame him for giving so much attention to the latter object, which is the one within his reach.

In fact, to do rule-of-three sums, except when you are dealing with definite numbers and quantities—to do such sums, in short, for real life, is next to impossible.



WHAT is it that promotes the most and the deepest thought in the human race? It is not learning; it is not the conduct of business; it is not even the impulse of the affections. It is suffering: and that, perhaps, is the reason why there is so much suffering in the world. The angel that went down to trouble the waters, and to make them healing, was not, perhaps, entrusted with so great a boon as the angel who benevolently inflicted upon the sufferers the diseases from which they suffered.



OLD age in inanimate things is often likened to old age in man—an ancient ruined building, or an aged oak, to an old man ; but these common similes are very shallow, and somewhat derogatory to mankind. A far deeper resemblance is to be found in a tropical forest, or even in a single tree in such a forest—where fading leaves, brown from much endurance, young buds, ripe fruit, green bright foliage, and dead branches present themselves at once to your sight, and give you all the seasons at one time. So it is with man. You may notice outward or even inward signs of decadence and decay ; but, simultaneously, there are hopes, aspirations, affections, in all stages of growth and development—nascent, virile, and decadent.

It is not only the aged statesman who adheres to life, and who, when dying, still takes the keenest interest in the affairs of this world. But poor peasants do the same ; and the dying rustic will brighten up at a bit of farm news.



IT is a great motive for tolerance to reflect that the men who differ from you most in opinion, may most resemble you in nature—may be most like you in heart and soul. Many a theologian, in former days, has helped to burn a

man who was almost to him a second self; whereas he left unmolested the worldly man who, differing from him in all the deeper emotions of the soul, did not care to differ from him in matters of religious opinion.



THE most common-place people become highly imaginative when they are in a passion. Whole dramas of insult, injury, and wrong pass before their minds—efforts of creative genius, for there is sometimes not a fact to go upon. Shakespeare's lesser genius required some chronicle, or fable, to work upon for his poor plays; but an angry person's tragedies require no adventitious aids and accessories, resting solely upon the creative power of an imagination inflamed by anger.



NO man asks another how much money he possesses. Are there not other matters in which reticence is equally required from the would-be questioner? Questions have given more offence than perhaps any other mode of speech. If silence is golden, and speech is silvern, that peculiar form of speech called questioning is, for the most part, brazen.

WHEN you find yourself unpopular with those amongst whom you live, or with the world in general, do not ask yourself what you have done, but what you have said, to produce this unpopularity.



THERE is an evil (it is but a small one) which I suspect is produced by long periods of peace and tranquillity in a nation. It is that people cease to speak plainly and distinctly. At least that is the only way in which I can account for the singular indistinctness which pervades English talking. That this indistinctness does exist, is a statement in which I am supported, I believe, by the greatest musical teachers, who say that one of their main difficulties, in teaching English people to sing, is to make them open their mouths properly. Now we do not find that the English in former days were blamed for indistinctness of speech. No doubt they spoke out very plainly at the Norman conquest—during all our numerous civil wars—during the contest between Charles and his parliament—at the Restoration, and at the Revolution of 1688. But it may be doubted

whether they have well opened their mouths to speak since that time, unless indeed during their contest with Napoleon the First. The long period of peace since that time has afforded the means of cultivating many arts and sciences ; but the art of speaking distinctly has dwindled down into the art of concealing thought by painful indistinctness of speech.

This may be a fanciful mode of explaining the phenomenon ; and it may be urged that the notion which has become fashionable, that it is desirable to conceal, if not to repress, all emotions, has conduced to this result of indistinctness of speech.

There is no doubt, however, that this indistinctness is a great drawback upon the pleasure of social intercourse.

One way of bringing home to most people's apprehension the prevalence of the indistinctness of speech would be, to ask them to note down the number of times in each day in which they may observe that the word " what " is used, and that a sentence is obliged to be repeated again. This occasions a sad loss of time ; and a busy people should recognise the fact that business is much hindered by this constant repetition.



THERE are hardly any words in the English language used so confusedly one for the other, as the words *rule* and *principle*. You constantly see, or hear, the word principle used, and in its highest sense, when it is only a rule that is in question.

The attendant verbs generally used, may serve to illustrate the difference between the substantives rule and principle. You can make a rule ; you cannot make a principle : you can lay down a rule ; you cannot, properly speaking, lay down a principle. It is laid down for you. You can establish a rule ; you cannot, properly speaking, establish a principle. You can only declare it. Rules are within your power : principles are not. Yet the mass of mankind use the words as if they had exactly similar meanings, and choose one or the other, as may best suit the rhythm of the sentence.



THE intense individuality which is to be observed in mankind—an individuality so all-pervading, that a profound observer of mankind will admit that no one character is really similar to any other character—is an antidote to the effects that otherwise would be produced by

pungent criticism, just satire, good advice, and dramatic similitude.

This is a saying which requires careful explanation and exemplification.

Why is it that the wisest advice, criticism, and satire fail to strike home? It is because the person advised, criticised, or satirised, feels, and, to a certain extent, rightly feels, that what is said does not thoroughly apply to him or her; because, after all, his or her character is not really like the character advised, satirised, or criticised.

To illustrate what is meant by this maxim, I will take the case of dramatic similitude. You are reading aloud an essay, or a play, or a novel; and, in the course of your reading, you come upon a character, not an agreeable one, which is, as you think, exactly similar to the character of some one in the company. You become very hot; you hardly dare look up: you suffer, sympathetically, from the pain which you fear that you are giving to that person. You need not, however, have disturbed yourself in this way. You look up, with fear and trembling, and you find that your friend, or your relation, does not perceive the resemblance at all; and, from his or her comments, you learn that he or she is in the condition, ironically described by Hamlet, when

he says, " Let the gall'd jade wince, our withers are unwrung."

This proceeds, as I intimated before, from the intense individuality of every man, and every woman, amongst us. It may be quite true, that the man or woman in question is as vain, proud, exacting, quarrelsome, turbulent, or tiresome, as the character in the novel or the play you are reading. But it is a thousand chances to one that the species of vanity, pride, turbulence, or tiresomeness is exactly of the same nature. Consequently, though you think the cap fits, your auditor or auditress entirely declines to put it on ; and the severe comments in the novel, or the essay, or the play, fall off from him, or her, as water from a duck's back. Not a feather is wetted or ruffled.

This, at first sight, appears to be a great misfortune ; but, after all, the human race would be too malleable, would be too easily formed after one model by satire, advice, criticism, and dramatic representation, if there were not this intense and saving individuality of character.



“**G**REAT Sun, all-powerful Lord of Day, I prithee melt the snow upon the mountain tops, for I am very poor and weak, and need much sustenance.”

Thus prayed a tiny rivulet which wound its downward way, amidst great rocks, into the plains below. There had been a long-continued drought ; the water-mosses stood high up upon the stepping stones ; the resting-places of the rivulet were but small puddles instead of ample pools ; and it sang but a thin and wiry song, like that of a great singer who has long passed his prime. In short, the rivulet feared that it was going to die.

The gracious Sun rose higher in its might, and melted the snow upon the mountains ; and the rivulet became a rushing, furious, eddying mountain stream.

In the first flow of thankfulness, it asked the Sun what it should do to prove its gratitude.

The Sun replied, “Impetuous mountain stream, I need nothing now, but I would, that when you descend into the plains, you should send up clouds to me, for I am weary of seeing the mean ways of men ; and the odours of their great cities are not pleasant to me.”

The mountain stream rushed down into the

plain ; but, there, meeting with a chasm in the earth, the principal part of the current descended into that chasm to seek for coolness. What little water was left took its pleasure in burying itself in a sandy district that was near to the chasm. The forgetful stream did not send up a single cloud to interpose its fleecy self between the Sun and the mean ways of men, and the odours of their noisome cities.

The gracious Sun went on melting the snow, for the benefactor is never tired of benefiting ; but it said to itself, " The mountain stream, approaching the great cities of the plains, has imbibed somewhat of the ungenerous nature of mankind, and is only grateful in the first moment of gratitude. I see that if you want a return for good services, you must ask for it at once."



NOTHING is more undramatic than that which the drama purposes to represent—viz., real life. Let any man reflect upon the important events, either in domestic, social, or public life, which he has witnessed, and will he not say that, for the most part, they were conducted in a very tame, haphazard, and common-place manner ?

Then, again, the drama, with all the skill that may be expended upon it, must fail to represent the lengthiness and dreariness of large portions of human life and human endeavour. The perseverance and the resolution which are shown in awaiting events can never be represented on the stage. How is one to represent a "masterly inactivity?" How is one to represent the carrying on of a long course of policy by a statesman?

Again—and this, though a slight matter of detail, affords a very notable difference between the drama and real life—how is one to represent abject poverty upon the stage, where everything is so large? People can walk up and down their rooms on the stage and make fine speeches with due emphasis. But one of the greatest miseries of poverty in real life arises from limited space and the consequent over-crowding.

Again, nobody has time or inclination to use good metaphors in real life; and, as for dialogue in real life, it is little more than a constant series of interruptions; and the most important conclusions are often arrived at by several people talking at once and not listening to one another.

Besides, in real life, the greatest affairs are settled by something that is written down. On the stage the document is accepted or rejected at once; in real life it undergoes an immensity of

verbal criticism—the most prosaic and undramatic thing in the world to witness.

When war is about to be decided upon by the chiefs of a nation, these chiefs, even when they are in levée dress, and when Lord Russell or Lord Palmerston is Prime Minister, do not draw their swords, as in the *Trovatore*—now advancing, now receding from the footlights, and exclaiming “How they prefer death to dishonour!” or any other operatic sentiment. There is no “*suoni la tromba*” to encourage them; but a number of middle-aged and elderly gentlemen, sitting round a table, listen to a long document, much conned over before, the result of many erasures and manifold interlineations. The somnolency which is apt to attend the reading of long documents, and which is, perhaps, the best reward for writing them, prevails; or, at least, some wicked wags, who will make fun of anything, declare that it prevails; and thus, very undramatically, a great war is initiated.



THERE was much discussion, in a company of thoughtful persons, about the main divisions in which men and women might be classified. One of the company said, “The widest

and deepest distinction that I know of, is that which divides men into 'good-natured' and 'ill-natured.' I admit that there are certain intellectual distinctions that appear to be well-defined, viz., that all men are, whether consciously or unconsciously, followers of Plato or Aristotle; and I dare say that anybody who thoroughly understands the distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective,' divides men into two classes, the one considering everything objectively, the other subjectively. But I maintain that mine is the most important, if not the widest distinction. By 'good-natured' and 'ill-natured' I do not mean 'good-tempered' and 'ill-tempered.' The variety in tempers depends much upon matters which are upon the surface, such as the different degrees of nervousness of temperament; but the distinction I allude to goes deep down into the character. The man who is blessed with a 'good nature' wishes for everything to turn out well. Of nations, of individuals, of political changes, of personal disputes, he is always desiring that the outcome may be good. If the Manichæan theory were true, he would always be found on the side of the 'Good Being,' while the other man is on the side of the 'Evil Being.' The conduct of the good-natured man may not be irreproachable;

on the contrary, he may have many vices, but somehow he has chosen the right side, and is always wishing for it to prevail, even if, in his own person, he sometimes lends an unwilling assistance to the opposite side. King David was on the right side."

Now this may seem to you a poor and shallow classification ; but try it in real life for some time, and see whether you cannot range all the men whose characters you know well, under one or other of the opposing banners.



I DO not know that there is anything, except it be humility, which is so valuable as an incident of education as accuracy. And accuracy can be taught. Direct lies told to the world are as dust in the balance when weighed against the falsehoods of inaccuracy. These are the fatal things. And they are all-pervading. I scarcely care what is taught to the young if it will but implant in them the habit of accuracy.

Now, look at the matter in this light. Take the speech of any man for any given day. For once that he wilfully gives a wrong colour (with an eye to his own interests) to anything which he states or narrates, he mistakes or mis-

describes twenty times, on account of his inability to tell anything accurately.

Besides, there is this important result from a habit of accuracy, that it produces truthfulness even on those occasions where a man would be tempted to be untruthful. He gradually gets to love accuracy more even than his own interests : at last he has a passion for accuracy.



THERE is frequent discussion in the present day as to what people should learn. Some say, natural sciences, some say languages, some say art, some say those especial arts by which a living is gained.

It appears to me that there are three great points to be aimed at in the choice of subjects for early education. The first is, that something should be chosen to educate upon which is difficult, which, therefore, requires continuity and severity of attention, and which also demands accuracy.

2. This something should be a thing which does not demand qualities that are not early developed in the young. That is why I object to Latin verses and to composition, generally. The persons who are able to compose early

(except musicians) are persons who have a great talent for plagiarizing and for the humblest forms of assimilation. These powers ought not to be encouraged, for they dwarf originality.

3. Let the thing to be studied, be something which is to a certain extent remote from common life ; for a man is but half a man whose knowledge is bounded by the study of the art by which he gains his daily bread.

In addition to the foregoing maxims, I would lay down the rule that whatever you choose as subjects for study, you should try to make the student care for study in general. I mean, insert into his mind, if you can, a love and a desire for knowledge. He is only to be under you educators for a few years. What a triumph it is for you, if, while he is under your care, you influence him in such a manner that you make study a thing of delight to him ! And what a failure it is, if you so disgust him with the acquisition of knowledge, that he throws you and your books overboard as things which are done with, when he comes to what are fondly called years of discretion !

Pursuing this subject of education, I should say that every well-educated man or woman ought to have that knowledge of mathematics which may be gained from the first five books of Euclid. You may be sure that no one ever

mastered these first five books without becoming ever afterwards a better reasoner. And, even in domestic life, it is the greatest comfort to have to deal with people who can appreciate and abide by the first principles of reasoning.



IT is a strange thing to chronicle, but in England we often confer honour upon a man when he meets with misfortune, and because he meets with misfortune. A county member, after a hard fight, loses an election. We forthwith make him a peer. Again, a man loses an appointment, or quits it on account of infirmity or old age. Forthwith there is a knighthood or a baronetcy for him. This is very kind; but it may be doubted whether, for the service of the State, it would not be well to confer honour upon a man when he is in full vigour, and when it will add force to him at a time when he is forcible—when, to use an Irish expression, it will give “more power to his elbow.” These “consolation” honours, though very humane, are not the most beneficial to the State.



THE BEARING-REIN.—It was observed to a poor man, a good-natured man in the main, but somewhat cynical, and apt, when he was in a cynical mood, to use strong language, that all knowledge, but that of heraldry, is worth something. To which he replied, "Do you think it nothing to be able to discern somewhat of the characters of the principal personages who constitute the upper ten thousand in London?"

It was admitted that this knowledge was of some value.

He then went on to say, "Whenever you observe a horse, or horses, in a carriage, which horse, or horses, are suffering from a tight bearing-rein, you may surely conclude that the owner is utterly unobservant of what he ought to observe, or very ignorant of what he ought to know, or pompous, or cruel. He must be very unobservant, or he would see that his horses are suffering from this bearing-rein. He must be very ignorant, if he does not know that a horse loses much of its power of draught and cannot recover itself so well when it stumbles, if it have a tight bearing-rein. He must be very cruel, if, observing and knowing these

things, he does not provide a remedy. He must be very pompous, if he prefers that his horses should be made to rear their heads on high, and to rattle their trappings about (which is a sign of their exceeding discomfort), to their being dealt with humanely and reasonably.

"Well, then, I observe the equipages where this irrationally tight bearing-rein is used. I then look at the arms on the carriages; and I know who are the greatest fools in London in the upper classes.

"The be-wigged brute and idiot of a coachman" (our cynical friend, you see, used strong language), "thinks it a very fine thing to sit behind these poor animals with their stuck-up heads; but his master ought to know better."

It was allowed by the cynical man's friends to whom he addressed this speech, that he had somewhat justified his study of heraldry. And then they bethought them of how the bearing-rein had been tightened most injudiciously in many other greater matters; how, in a family, the bearing-rein is sometimes so tightened that all freedom of action and of development is repressed, and, ultimately, prevented. They then thought how monarchs and statesmen had made such severe use of the bearing-rein, that the people, whom these monarchs and states-

men governed, had almost lost the power of stepping out for themselves. And it was observed that England had so dealt with her sister Ireland in putting on the severest bearing-rein, and preventing that sister from occupying herself in manufactures, that she, England, must now pay for all the incapacity and poverty which she has caused by her injudicious and cruel mode of harnessing.

Amongst this company the simple words "the bearing-rein" became a common phrase; and when they met one another, and when the subject of any injudicious restraint or restriction was discussed in their presence, they merely said to one another, "our friend's bearing-rein, and we need not the knowledge of the Herald's College to tell us who is the foolish person that has harnessed his horses in this most injudicious manner."



ONE is seldom more impressed, or at least one ought seldom to be more impressed, with the great achievements of man, and what a wonderful creature he is, than in listening to and seeing an opera.

Think of the exquisite skill of the composer,

who has written a separate score for each instrument, and how all these various sounds blend into delicious harmony.

Observe the skill of the scene-painter,—how nicely he has adapted his work to the distance from which it is to be viewed.

Give some credit, too, to the poet who has invented the novel or the drama, from which the opera is taken. Nor is the man who has adapted the graceful fiction to meet the necessities of operatic performance to be without his meed of praise.

Note the mechanical contrivance which is everywhere employed, and how smoothly it all goes.

Consider the skill with which the building has been formed, both with regard to sight and sound.

Again, observe—and this is sure to have gained your observation—what skill is shown by the actors and actresses. Those thrilling notes have not been produced without immense study, labour, and reflection.

Lastly, do not fail to take note of the admirable organization which brings all this thought, and labour, and skill into a mirror, as it were, of representation.

And yet there are some people who would

persuade us that the creatures who have done all this are to perish like the beasts of the field. Humanity is to make continuous progress, but the individuals are nought, and will be nought. I cannot believe it.




THE qualities which attract us most in animals, are their demerits. The fox has ceaseless interest for us, both in fact and in fable, from his wicked versatility of guile; and the cool, demure selfishness of the cat is not without its charm to the lovers of the feline race. Is there anything similar to this feeling in our regard for human beings? I think there is; but then the demerits must not be such as to annoy us much, and so ruffle our tolerance for them.




CERTAINLY, the lover is no lover, or but a very small-hearted one, who does not see much beauty in the faults of the mistress of his affections.




MUSHROOMS, in their resolute growth, will lift up large slabs of stone—such is the force of *parvenus* in the vegetable world.



THERE is nothing so easily made offensive as good reasoning ; and men of clear logical minds if not gifted at the same time with tact, make more enemies than men with bad hearts and unsound understandings.



ALWAYS win fools first. They talk much ; and, what they have once uttered, they will stick to ; whereas, there is always time, up to the last moment, to bring before a wise man arguments that may entirely change his opinion.



NO man, or woman, was ever cured of love by discovering the falseness of his or her lover. The living together for three long, rainy days in the country has done more to dispel love than all the perfidies in love that have ever been committed.

THERE is certain work that had better be done roughly: indeed which loses all its best effect, if not done roughly. The wayside crosses and "Christs" to be seen in Catholic countries would have little interest for us, if they were finished works of art. In their roughness lies their touchingness.



ONE of the blackest things in human life, and one which gives occasion for most pain of a most continuous kind, is the practice of teasing. It has been wittily said that if three persons were on a desert island together, two of them would combine to make the third a slave. I do not know how this may be; but I am sure that the two would combine to tease the third, and to ridicule all his ways and peculiarities.

Whenever you come to know well any little knot of human beings, whether in a family, a school, an office, a ship's company, an officers' mess, a factory, a workshop, or any other assemblage, you generally find that there is some poor creature who is perpetually made a butt for the arrows of the mean wit of the assemblage, and whose life is made considerably

miserable thereby. This is one of the most cowardly propensities in human nature, and deserves to be treated with the utmost severity.

The victim is often victimised for his good qualities, and especially on account of his differing in some important particulars from the people around him.

A great man said to me the other day, "The boy at school whom we ridiculed most, and despised most, for his many faults and oddities, has turned out to be the best of us. It is he who, as a Christian missionary, has gone out to distant lands, and who has sacrificed everything for the spiritual good of the heathen. He was the boy of greatest soul and mind amongst us; but we did not know it, and we led him a very hard life."



"**P**ORTIONS and parcels of the dreadful past." The poet, I think, means the past in an individual's life; but what I think of is the past for the whole human race. Soothe the present as much as we may; look forward as hopefully as we can to the future, still the dreadful past must overshadow us.

The Oxford edition of Gibbon consists of

eight volumes with four or five hundred pages in each volume. The exact number of pages is 3,860. The fondest admirers of Gibbon cannot say that it is light reading. Evening after evening goes by, and, if the reader is conscientious, and does not skip, it is a long time before the work is read. Indeed, in these degenerate days I doubt whether there are many persons in the world who can say that they have read their Gibbon right through. One becomes a little wearied of sentences like the following: "His abject courtiers, pretending great value for his life, might accuse the emperor of a like impetuosity, whether he headed his troops in full retreat, or pursued his flying and defenceless enemies with indomitable vigour." It takes some time to appreciate in sentences like these the studied ambiguity, and to enjoy the full flavour of the relentless sarcasm. In a word, the reading of Gibbon is no slight task, even for a student. Thinking once of what these pages contain, I came to a rash and hasty conclusion, that they chronicled about a thousand deaths by violence for each page.

Resolving to test the accuracy of this conjecture, I went through sixty pages in the volume I had lately been reading, and found

that the deaths by violence recorded in those pages amounted, on an average, to about 9,000 per page. But then the historian was narrating the result of some trifling religious differences upon subjects relating to points of doctrine which no man has ever comprehended, and which probably no man ever will comprehend. We can hardly doubt that had these pages been devoted to an account of great wars, or of the irruptions into fair Italy of Vandal, Goth, Hun, Frank, or Visigoth, the average would have been still higher. Then, if turning from the history of those conflicts which may chiefly be considered European, we contemplate the still more cruel and bloody wars in the East, we might find in any such historian as Rollin a still higher average of slaughter for each astounding page.

The past, therefore, as I said, fairly overshadows our minds, make what we may of the present and future.

I may mention, too, that if those who were wounded in past times bore the same proportion to the slain as they do in modern times, then the number of those who might be inferred to have been wounded in the battles recorded in the aforesaid pages of Gibbon, would be such, that if placed on beds of three feet in

width, they would have encircled the globe four times.

Though, as I have said, the past must overshadow us, yet it is with the present and the future that we have to deal. These ugly wars go on. It is true there is not quite the barbarism of former days, but there is an amplitude of slaughter, which shows us to be worthy descendants of Frank, or Hun, or Visigoth, or Norman. There is not the open and distinctly expressed desire for conquest, but, to use a modern phrase, the nations "drift into war;" and, when once in that maelstrom, find it as hard as ever to steer into calm waters.

Does anything remain to be done? Nations will not consent to arbitration; and the ideas of glory, of national honour, of the right of each race to exist by itself, and to govern for itself, are as strong as ever. An enthusiast, however, might maintain (and enthusiasts rule future generations, even when they provoke the ridicule of their own time) that something might be done to avert these wars, for the most part so purposeless. There might, he would say, be a Peace Party in each nation, which should have intimate correspondence with similar parties in other nations, and thus form a great Peace Federation throughout the world.

It is easy to ridicule such a proposition ; it is also quite as easy to ridicule the present state of things. For what, after all, as it has been observed, is the end of most wars? Nothing but this, that a number of elderly gentlemen meet together in an official room ; and, sitting round a table covered with green cloth, quietly arrange all that might just as well have been arranged before the war began.



THE multiplication of small rules of practice is one of the greatest evils of a high state of civilisation. Some great thing is to be done—some act of justice to be carried out ; some privilege to be obtained ; some right to be maintained—and you attach to it some small formality, which proves to be the greatest hindrance.

Acts of Parliament abound in these dangerous and needless formalities. For instance, a certain paper is ordered to be laid before the House of Commons forty days. The consequence often is, that the paper being laid on the table a short time before the end of one session, no action can be taken upon it until some time after the ensuing session. Instances might be given

by the hundred in which these small rules and regulations have a truly fatal effect, not only in small affairs, but in great affairs. Moreover, the smaller the rule, and the less obvious its necessity, the greater is the chance of its being neglected.

I will give another curious instance of the mischief of a small regulation. There are Acts of Parliament in which it is enacted that certain judges shall be appointed at a certain time, and all at one time, to consider certain classes of cases. The trouble and difficulty which such a regulation has created are immense. A case, we will say, is to be heard three months hence. Who can pledge himself that he will be at liberty enough, or well enough, to hear a case three months hence?

The truth is that the framers of these small rules and regulations should be men of the highest imagination in order to imagine every possible variety of circumstances connected with the rule or regulation; whereas the said framers are often the most pedantic of mankind.

Disfranchisement—I use the word in the largest sense, and not merely as applying to votes—follows inevitably upon the creation of many rules and regulations for the gaining of the franchise in question.

THERE certainly is a great deal of compensation in the world.

Now the melancholy man, who has the least hope, and takes the worst view of his own prospects and of everybody else's, is much to be pitied. But then there is this compensation—that whatever evil happens to him, though he may be depressed by it, he cannot be surprised or disappointed.

A man I knew, being about to accept some great office, or to be married, or to take some perilous step or other in life, being of a superstitious turn of mind, resolved to try what direction the *sortes Shakesperianæ* would give him. He opened his Shakespeare at random, and his eye fell upon the line, "Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily."

This wise prognostication is one which all melancholy men have already turned up in opening at random the book that chronicles the conclusions of their own minds.



AN ox, feeding, as the manner is of oxen, upon grass, and being, therefore, of a placid nature, was much shocked at the conduct of

a serpent of its acquaintance, when it saw the serpent first stare at, with its baleful eyes, and then proceed to swallow, a poor frog. "How could you be so cruel?" said the mild-eyed ox. "My dear friend," replied the subtle serpent, "if the frog had hopped one hop away from me, or made a single croak, I would not have eaten it for the world; but, as you saw, it had not the slightest objection, and there is no injury where there is consent."

The ox, though a thoughtful, is not a swiftly-thinking animal. It had browsed for some time, and the serpent had slipped away for its noon-tide sleep of digestion, before the ox bethought itself of the reply that it might have given to the serpent—"Yes. Fear is often mistaken, or pretended to be mistaken, for consent."

A horse, who had overheard the conversation between the serpent and the ox, made a much shrewder remark; but, with the shrewdness that is gained from suffering, he made it in soliloquy, as is the custom with that patient creature, the horse—"That is the way with my master. Because I am silent, he thinks, or pretends to think, like that hypocrite of a serpent, that I do not suffer when he is cruel to me."



AN astronomer and his wife went out walking together. Presently they came to a cottage where there was a well before the door. On the other side of the road there was a little pond.

This well was known to be very deep, and the astronomer looked down into it, hoping to see, as he did see, the stars overhead reflected in it; for the stars do shine into the deep well, even in the day-time.

"Come here, husband, you can see yourself here in the pond," exclaimed the wife. But he had not come out to see a reflection of himself, and he said, "Wife, you are like the rest of the world: when you look at the most beautiful thing in Nature, your first thought is whether you can see yourself in it."



THEY say that when one has a clear idea one is always able to express it clearly. I rather agree with this doctrine, but am inclined to think that there are exceptions. Now, for instance, I have an idea in my mind, and have had it for a long time, but I find great difficulty in expressing it. I try to do so metaphorically, but always find that the metaphor halts, or is

insufficient, or breaks down. However, I will attempt to give the reader my idea, which I know will at first seem to him so simple that he will think there is nothing in it. But I know and feel that there is a great deal in it.

My idea is this—that we should make the greatest progress in art, science, politics, and morals, if we could train up our minds to look straight, and steadfastly, and uninterruptedly, at the thing in question that we are observing. This seems a very slight thing to do ; but, practically, it is hardly ever done. Between you and the object rises a mist of technicalities, of prejudices, of previous knowledge, and, above all, of terrible familiarity. You really do not look at the object which ought to be looked at, but at other things which have been said, written, or done about it. To look hard and closely at the object, is, you may depend upon it, one of the rarest and highest efforts of the human mind.

Now consider some of the great abuses which have prevailed in human affairs. I will take four of them. (1.) The trial of a cause by battle. (2.) The belief in witchcraft. (3.) The application of torture as a test for eliciting the truth. (4.) The modern duel.

The moment any man looked at any one of these horrors and absurdities straight, stead-

fastly, and uninterruptedly, of course it faded away and fled before him. Whereas even a Bacon, not looking at it in this way, but only looking at phantoms and "idols" which were between him and it, was dominated by it, and believed in it.

Scientific discovery almost always depends upon a man's looking at something in the dry light of the intellect, and isolating himself from the previous thoughts both of himself and other men about it. What is called "absence of mind" has always been noted in great inventors and discoverers. Of course this absence of mind only means intense presence of mind directed to the matter of which the great man is thinking. The power of giving supreme attention to one thing is the principal qualification of the greatest men.

The spirit of his age is a thing which often prevents a man from looking straight at his object. How potent the spirit of the age is, may be inferred from a proverb, which, strange to say, was made by the Arabs, who say that *a man is not so much the child of his father, as the child of the age in which he lives.*



THERE is a subject which I wish to touch upon, and which can be best illustrated by a conversation which took place amongst certain persons known in fiction as "Friends in Council," and who, perhaps, have their prototypes in real life.

Milverton. I had a very bad night last night, for I could not get rid of a certain train of thought which prevented sleep.

Ellesmere. Weak-minded man! I can always put myself to sleep by reading history, or doing a long sum. But what was the nature of your lucubrations?

Milverton. I was thinking how it is that there are certain characters which are apparently most repugnant to us, and yet the company of those persons who have these characters is most pleasant to us. You can see what a large field this question opens; and how the great questions of congeniality and uncongeniality, of the effects of similarity and dissimilarity, flowed in upon me and prevented sleep.

Ellesmere. I quite understand what you mean, and it is not always that I do understand what you mean.

Milverton. There is Alpha, for instance. I like to take the Greek letters of the alphabet,

because if you put any English initial, people are sure to connect that initial with some living person.

Well, then, Alpha's mind is apparently most repulsive to mine. Most of his thoughts, opinions, and judgments are thoroughly different from mine. Even when our conclusions agree, he seems to have arrived at his conclusion in some roundabout, or crooked, or sinister way, which is most unwelcome to me ; and yet I like the man exceedingly, and desire his company. He is a charming person.

Sir Arthur. It is exactly my case with Beta. If there is anything in the world I dislike, it is a uniformity of harsh judgments upon other people. Now, as you know, Beta is almost always harsh, rugged, and severe ; and yet, to use Milverton's words, I like the man amazingly : and he is to me a charming person.

Ellesmere. The instance I shall give is still more striking. If there is anything in the world I like, it is clearness. I would like to write a clear handwriting, to talk clearly, to speak distinctly, and to compose sentences of such clearness, that he who runs may not only read, but understand what he reads. Well, you all know Gamma. Do you recollect that novel of Walter Scott's, in which Dugald Dalgetty is the principal figure ?

I have forgotten the name, though I know the book almost by heart.

Milverton. "The Legend of Montrose."

Ellesmere. You remember the Children of the Mist? I always say that Gamma belongs to that tribe, and is a Child of the Mist. I read his books—once, twice, nay, even thrice; but I am as bewildered after the third reading as after the first. His talk, too, produces very hazy weather in my mind. Yet his company to me is most delightful; and, to use Milverton's missyish phrase, he is a charming person to me.

Milverton. It may be a missyish phrase; but it is a very good one. Charming is the exact word to represent what I mean.

But to give another instance. There is Delta. He is, to use a phrase once used very aptly in *Punch*, an "argufying beggar." Now I do not in general like "argufying beggars." Then he is always pouncing down upon you for your small inconsistencies. You are putting on your great coat in a hurry, and you say, "Confound these railways! What a nuisance it is that one is obliged to be so punctual! In the good old coaching times one could always give oneself an extra ten minutes or quarter of an hour." Delta tries to remind you, at this most inappropriate time, when your arm has gone into your

coat at the wrong angle, that you said the other day that "the punctuality of railways was delightful."

Ellesmere. I know him well. There is nothing, however small, that he will not correct you in. He told me the other day, when I was dining with him, that I did not know how to hold my fork, and he showed me what was the proper way to hold a fork. Moreover, after dinner, he informed me that I spoilt his chairs by not sitting in them properly—which is not a pleasant thing for a host to say to a guest. Then, he is impeccable himself. Nobody can ever find him out in doing anything wrong, either as regards the highest forms of virtue, or the meanest forms of the world.

Sir Arthur. An odious fellow; perfectly odious!

Ellesmere. Nothing of the kind. He is a charming fellow, if Milverton insists that I must use the word charming; and he rejoices in an unusual number of attached friends.

Milverton. I agree with Ellesmere. I always say, "*Gratior it dies*," when Delta comes to see me, though he puts me horribly to rights.

Sir Arthur. I should have thought such a man would have been detestable to both of you, especially to Ellesmere.

Milverton. Now how do you account for this phenomenon, or rather, these phenomena?

Ellesmere. Oh! by contrast. We like those people whose characters form a pleasing contrast to our own, and whose opinions differ from our own.

Milverton. That will not account for it in my case. It may in yours, Ellesmere; for you must admit you are a contentious animal. For my part, I am always disposed to like the people who agree with me.

Ellesmere. Yes, you do. It is a very notable weakness of yours.

Sir Arthur. I am the medium between you two. I don't dislike a man on account of his differing from me in character, or opinion; but I certainly do not like him on that account.

Milverton. It remains for me to give the explanation. It is, in my judgment, this:

You must allow me to talk metaphorically. I can only explain what I mean by a metaphor, taken from geology. There is some stratum in the man's character that is exquisitely pleasing to you, because co-incident with some stratum in your own. It is generally the sub-soil stratum. I breathe better on a chalk sub-soil; you, perhaps, Sir Arthur, on a gravelly sub-soil; Ellesmere, upon a sub-soil of clay.

Ellesmere. That's right; always assign to me whatever is unpleasant.

Milverton. Well, what comes up on the surface

is comparatively of little account. To keep up the metaphor, I am not particularly fond of the things which grow upon a chalky sub-soil ; but the air is fine and pleasant to me.

Now, to drop metaphor, and to take our friend Delta, for example, he is one of the most affectionate of men. That very fussiness and tiresomeness and love of management of his proceed from affection. He is wildly desirous that you should do whatever is right and becoming. He does not want to set himself up. You soon perceive this (no man can for long disguise his real nature), and you can't help liking him, though he may sometimes worry you.

Now, it was not only last night that I thought over this important subject. I have endeavoured, dozens of times, to come to a right conclusion about it, to ascertain why it is that people like one another ; and I am convinced *that it is likeness, and not contrast, which produces this liking*—likeness, mark you, in some essential particular, in some sub-stratum, as I said before, in the mind, which liking is not overcome by considerable dissimilarity upon the upper surface.

This, I know, is a very hold saying ; but, take it away with you ; examine likings with my view of the subject in your mind ; and tell me in

a year's time—if we all live till then—whether you are not disposed to agree with me.

To go back for a moment to Delta. Why does Ellesmere like him? Because Ellesmere, with all his many faults, is a singularly affectionate person, and likes affectionate people and affectionate animals—dogs, for instance. That is also a strong point with me. I can put up with anything in a man, if he is a loving man. Hence, we both like Delta hugely, not from contrast, as I said before, but from similarity. I declare, the more I think of this subject, the more convinced I am that I am right, and that I have made somewhat of a discovery in human character in pronouncing rather for likeness, than for contrast, as a bond of sympathy.



THE expression, "dumb dogs," is not a mere phrase, adopted by the Puritans of old, to describe those preachers who did not pronounce, with sufficient virulence, against some particular doctrine in theology. There are such creatures as dumb dogs, and very pleasant creatures they are. They may be seen in the prairies sitting at the doors of their houses, or rather at the holes of their burrows, or flitting from burrow to burrow to interchange visits. These dumb dogs live

with their wives and families in delightful village communities.

It happened that an ordinary dog—that is, a dog who could bark, and who lived with men—met a prairie-dog with whom he had some slight acquaintance, and was telling him how much he, the ordinary dog, was respected; what good society he kept, living entirely with a superior animal called man, who walked on two legs; and how everything in his friend's house was put under his charge. The dumb dog could make no distinct reply, but wagged his tail respectfully, while listening to the self-praise of his own friend.

A fox, who happened to be passing by, stayed to listen to this conversation; and, from his stealthy way of movement, his presence had been unknown to the dogs. Now, foxes do not like the dogs that bark; and the fox was not sorry to have an opportunity of putting down this clamorous friend of man. He said to the town dog, "The noise you make, must ever prevent your living happily with other dogs, or with your wife and family; and, as for your fine friend, man, it is well known that the noisiest animals always please him most. He does not make a friend of me, the wisest of all the animals; and, in his own species, it is the public speaker, and

not the wise man, to whom he gives lordship over him. He is far too foolish to know the merit that there is in a dumb dog."

The town dog made a hasty bark of farewell to his prairie friend, and returned to the city, with his tail between his legs ; for he knew that the words of the fox, though spiteful, were true ; and he himself had been jealous of the noisy men who seemed to have so much power over the man friend with whom he lived.



MOST terrors are but spectral illusions. Only have the courage of the man who could walk up to his spectre seated in the chair before him, and sit down upon it : the horrid thing will not partake the chair with you.



THE chemistry of conduct in life has not yet met with accurate expounders ; and probably never will meet with them.

Vast differences of thought between the ancients and the moderns—not to the advantage of the moderns—are expressed in this one fact, that the ancients wrought ornament into, or upon, what was useful, while the moderns take great

pains, and apply the choicest materials, to fashion something which, though it have the form of usefulness, is never to be used, and is purely ornamental. This idea is fully exemplified when you see a drinking vessel, or a vase, set up on a bracket, never to be removed, except for the purpose of being shown as an ornament.



TWO things, which cannot be brought to perfection, unless they are learnt in youth, are music and decisiveness.



DECISIONS are carried by momentum. For example, it is not altogether the thing said, but the time at which it is said, that may constitute the greatest part of its potency. A suggestion of itself weighty, if uttered at the beginning of a debate, may not equal a much less weighty suggestion which is made after a long time has been spent in debating. Again, the success of any particular counsel often depends as much upon the reputation and position of the counsellor, as upon the counsel given. The longer arm of the lever may make the smaller weight prevail.

THERE is in most minds a moment of regret and reaction immediately after a decision has been arrived at ; and the arguments " on the other side " never appear so forcible as when you have just resolved, and have proclaimed your resolve, to act in contravention to them.



ALL the other passions condescend at times to accept the inexorable logic of facts ; but jealousy looks facts straight in the face, ignores them utterly, and says that she knows a great deal better than they can tell her.



JEALOUSY is often so absurd that, in climates where the sun is a constant presence, you might almost expect that the jealous would seriously complain of the beloved person being always followed so closely by his or her shadow.



THE benefactor always retains some affection for the person whom he has benefited. No extent of ingratitude succeeds in utterly effacing this kindly feeling on the part of the benefactor.

Now, no doubt, a Swift or a Rochefoucault would, in his cynical way, give a very unpleasant reading of this patent fact. But, in reality, it is a beautiful arrangement of Nature, or, as we ought to say, of Providence. The benefactor, just in proportion as he has done his work lovingly, has his "exceeding great reward" in an increase of lovingness; for there cannot be a doubt that it is a far happier, and, if we may say so, a more divine thing, to love than to be loved.



THERE are some things which it is almost impossible to over-estimate. One of these is the indifference of men to all affairs but those which touch them nearly, or which relate to things that are about to happen to them immediately. A full belief in this indifference would often prevent agonies of shame and terror. Even the murderer, in some flagrant case of murder, who imagines that the whole world is thinking of him, would be astonished to find how small and transitory is the attention given to him, so busy and preoccupied are all men about their own affairs.



TO take an interest in many things, is one of the greatest of felicities. This interest may be encouraged by education, may be extended by culture ; but it is a gift of nature, and one of her best gifts. "My mind is an inhabitant of many things," said the myriad-minded Lord Bacon ; but there are poor peasants who may lay claim to a similar largeness and variety of mental lodgment. You will find in all classes, from the highest to the lowest, men who take an interest in things which have no relation whatever—at least no relation which they can discern—to their own welfare ; while you find others, who, similarly situated, never hardly let their thoughts and their cares budge very far from their own firesides.



IT is a grand thing for the English language that there is no word for "*ennui*." If the creation had been drab-coloured ; if there had been no horses, dogs, water-rats, or dragon-flies ; if science and art had been intuitive ; if religion had been clear ; if all men's condition had been equal ; if men and women were always amenable to reason, and boys were always quiet—then the world might have been somewhat dull : there

would then have been a justifiable word for *ennui* in all languages; at present *ennui* is simply inanity or stupidity.



THERE was a beautiful river; but the river was very discontented, and made even of its beauty a source of discontent.

It had a sore grievance. There was a canal which, for a long way, went almost side by side with the river, and at such a little distance from it, that, on placid evenings, when even the fluttering of winged insects makes a gentle noise of joy, the river and the canal could hear one another speaking.

"This straight hideous thing," exclaimed the river, "why do men forsake me for it, stealing the water from me to feed its frightfulness!"

"I may be hideous," replied the canal, "and I certainly am straight; but then you see I am always of the same depth, whereas you brawl along, in a shallow way, over the stones here; while, at the further reach, you are deep enough to drown a giant. Now men, and they are not to be blamed for it, like what is of even depth and always serviceable."

The river murmured to itself something about

its unrecognised beauty and merit ; but did not make any distinct reply to the canal. For it could not.



SOME persons, instead of making a religion for their God, are content to make a god of their religion.



PATIENCE is even more rarely manifested in the intellect than it is in the temper.



IT amuses me," said A., "to hear you all give out your wonderful schemes of education—how science is to be combined with literature, and art be superimposed on both. I do not know how it may be in other countries ; but in Great Britain the first rudiments of education are, for the most part, unknown. ' Show me the man who can read well, write well (I mean the mechanical part of writing) talk well, speak well, and who has good manners. I have not met with him yet. I own I have met with men who can do some one or two of these things very well ; but where is the Admirable Crichton who can do them all well ? Mark you, I have not said any-

thing about ciphering well, nor about English composition.

"Wait a minute. Let me go to my desk, and I will bring you four or five letters to illustrate what I mean about the mechanical part of writing. Here they are: I have kept them together as curiosities.

"The first is from a man holding nearly the highest position that any subject in Europe can hold. I will defy you to make out even the signature of the letter, though I have given you a hint as to who the man is." (*We could not read the signature.*)

"The second is from a great official person who has dozens of letters to sign in the course of the day. The body of the letter is written by a clerk—how I pity that poor clerk if he has to decipher his chief's minutes! Can you say whose signature that is?" (*The letter was handed round, but no one could make out the signature. It was generally thought to resemble the first step of a centipede after it had crawled out from an ink-bottle.*)

"The third is from a great historian—a man whose works the world delights to read, and justly so. How I pity the poor printers who have to decipher his manuscript! I think you will make out the first sentence." (*The letter*

was handed round. B., who prides himself upon mastering handwriting, got through the first sentence rightly, and the second sentence. The third he said was a jungle, which he could not see his way through.)

"The fourth letter is from an eminent peer, who takes a great interest in education. I submit it for your interpretation."

B. "I think, if I could have half an hour's time over this letter, by myself and with a magnifying glass, I could make it all out; but it is an abominable handwriting."

"The fifth letter—the most remarkable of all of them—is from a most distinguished person. He is a poet, a novelist, a statesman, a philosopher. Can you make out any of it?" (*B. made out the words "My dear," at the beginning of the letter, and several other words in the course of the letter; but was not able to give us a single sentence complete.*)

A. "There is a curious story connected with this letter. It treats of a most important subject, and embodies much of the wit and wisdom of the writer. The man to whom it was addressed called in the aid of a government clerk who was said to be very skilful in deciphering handwritings, and he gave in writing his version of it. That version seemed to be very clever and very

deep. Further investigation by other persons showed that the government clerk's rendering was totally wrong. For instance, he had rendered a certain scribble as 'ideal,' when the word was in reality 'inherent.' The letter, therefore, according to the latest views of interpretation, and, as I believe, the right views, gave a new construction—also a very plausible one.

"Then came some acute fellow and said, 'The second reading of the letter is the right one, but the first evolves a very grand theory. To whom does it belong? Not to the writer of the letter, for he never intended it. Not to the government clerk, for he was a plain practical man, who knew nothing whatever about the subject. Not to us, who have thus had a beautiful theory put before us which we could not fail to understand, but which we certainly did not invent or initiate. It is a grand metaphysical theory evolved by chance out of bad writing.'"

But, seriously speaking, what a disgrace it is to these eminent men to write in such a way! What half-educated men they are! One does not like to say anything rude to such men; but one ought to suggest to them to go to school again, or, at least, to take private lessons of some good writing-master.

A. " Well, then, how few men can talk distinctly and clearly ! With how many persons, especially the young of this generation, is their talk a something which combines a lisp, a mutter, a mumble, and a moan ! How many times in the course of a conversation amongst English people do you not hear the question ' What did you say ? '

" Then, as to reading, I put it to this intelligent company :—Do you know among your numerous friends and acquaintances ten persons who can read well ? You are silent.

" Then as to public speaking, how few have attained to any proficiency in this art, which, however, is not a very difficult art ! It is a thousand pities that there are not more proficient in this art ; for, if there were, it would not have so exorbitant a value put upon it ; and men who are proficient in it would not occupy so great a position in the State as they do. The man who can do a thing well, is often the last man who can speak about it, or talk about it, well.

" Lastly, I come to the question of good manners, about which the extra twopence is to be charged at schools. For the last thirty years, with one or two remarkable exceptions, the most distinguished men in politics and in public life have been deficient in winning manners.

Though most agreeable men when you come to know them in private life, when you come to know them "at home" (as we used to say at school), they have manifested a shyness, an awkwardness, a reserve, an abruptness of demeanour, or a sphynx-like impenetrability, which has often separated them from those who would have been their most devoted friends.

"Have you ever seen an owl kept in a cage? How it abhors the light? how it shuffles into the most remote corner of its cage? Its ways of going on have often put me in mind of theirs.

"And now, have I not shown you that, before you make such a bother about art, science, and literature, you had better see that the first rudiments of education should be more attended to, and made more account of, than they are at present in Great Britain.

"Think what an accomplished man he would be, who could read well, write a clear handwriting, talk well, speak well, and who should have good manners."



IT is well meant, but it is probably a cruel thing of parents, to discourage vanity in their children; for, after all, what comfort can there be in life equal to vanity? Vanity is the

only thing which keeps most men's tempers tolerably sweet.

Moreover, vanity is of such a versatile nature that it will accommodate itself to all ages, fortunes, and circumstances. Hope grows old ; aspirations become middle-aged ; and even strong affections fade away. But vanity knows none of these foolish changes, and remains as unwrinkled as the sea. It is like the insect which always takes the colour of the leaf it feeds upon, and always finds a leaf to feed upon.

There are direct opposites to almost every affection of the mind but vanity. For hope, there is despair ; for joy, sorrow ; for pleasure, pain ; but there is no direct opposite in language to vanity. In fact we refuse to contemplate the possibility of there being a man so miserable as to possess the opposite quality to vanity.



ONE of the greatest obstacles to men of much ability, is the prevalence of fixed ideas about them. Not prejudices against them, but fixed ideas about their merits. The prevalence of these fixed ideas is very visible in criticisms upon literature, so that it is extremely

hazardous for a writer, who has excelled in one branch of literature, to take up another.

The same thing is to be seen as affecting all forms of human endeavour.

To take an instance, suppose a man has shown considerable skill in laying down oyster beds. But the same man has, or thinks he has, much skill in writing elegies. It is a hard task for him to persuade the world that his elegiac stanzas are worth anything. The world looks at his elegies, but asks, where are the oysters, for it has a fixed idea that nothing but the culture of oysters is to be looked for from that man.

The foregoing are common-place observations, and have before been made by this present writer, who has quoted the remark of Sir Walter Scott upon the all-accomplished Lord Peterborough—namely, how slow the world is to believe that the same man can do two different kinds of things equally well.

But what I now want to speak about, is the way in which the man of varied ability should look at and deal with these fixed ideas about himself. He should first think whether he cares supremely about his secondary qualifications being recognised by the world. To keep to the foregoing example: does he care to be an elegiac writer, more than he does to be a skilful

breeder of oysters ? If so, let him, in the second place, consider whether he has time (whether he is young enough, for instance) to overcome the fixed idea about him, that he can only cultivate oysters. Let him remember, and this is the gist of the whole matter, that the question is not, whether he can write elegies well, of which perhaps he has no doubt, but whether he can persuade the world that a man who has shown such skill in oyster cultivation, can also write good elegies. Sir Walter Scott had time and energy enough to persuade the world that he was a good writer of novels, as well as a good writer of romances in poetry. This way of putting the question will either make our oyster-breeder desist from the enterprise of elegiac writing ; or reconcile him to defeat, if he fail in it ; or encourage him in perseverance, if he has at the outset but little success.

The terrible influence of these fixed ideas is nowhere more potent than in family life, where you would, at first, think that general merits and capabilities would be more recognised. But it is not so. A fixed idea is found in every family of the peculiar powers and capabilities of each member of it ; and the other members of the family do not like his or her overstepping what they hold to be his or her peculiar province. For instance

(and I like to take the most familiar examples), Charles is a noted cricketer, while James is the indoors boy, who is supposed to excel not in rude sports but in the elegancies of life. Of course James dances well, whereas Charles has hitherto despised that graceful art. All of a sudden, however, he finds that he is nobody in a ball-room, and that he cannot get "the best girls" to dance with. Charles resolves to learn to dance. Of course his first attempts are somewhat clumsy. It is astonishing what discouragement he will receive from his family. Even the grave father of the family, who ought to be wiser, will say, "I think, Charles, you had better keep to out of doors exercises, and especially to cricketing, in which you have gained so much credit."

If Charles is wise, he will persevere, because dancing is an accomplishment which no young man should be without. Besides, there is time enough for him, as he is young, to overcome the fixed idea in the family about him, whereas time may be wanting to our elegiac friend to convince the world of his skill in writing elegies. He had, therefore, better keep to his cultivation of oysters, in which he is acknowledged to be supreme, and may get all the renown and all the profit he needs from the world, out of that.

IN accounting for the strange ways of mankind, sufficient note has never been taken of their dramatic nature and tendencies. It is not perceived how deep down these dramatic tendencies penetrate. It is not that most men and women can, and do, sometimes play a part ; that is, assume some character not their own : that the mean man, for some object, will play the part of a generous man—the gentle person of a furious person—the timid of the bold. This does not reveal the essentially dramatic nature of mankind. These are occasional characters, played for the time, in public or in private theatricals. But it is, that almost every man and every woman makes up his or her mind for a part which is to belong to him or her for life. There is an ideal character which they all aim at ; and their efforts in this direction account for all manner of apparent inconsistencies. Suppose, for instance, that a woman has once, accidentally, —perhaps from some real circumstance—played the part of an injured woman, and has played it well, she will perhaps “make up” for this part ever afterwards. It is no good attempting to convince her that she is not injured, she sticks to her part, which is a part she has taken up for life. Some people play the part of a humble

person—not falsely, not that they are very proud and yet pretend to be very humble—but they have taken up the character of humility, and will perform that part steadily throughout life, no matter into whatever inconsistencies it may lead them. For example, they give the most arrogant advice with professions of the deepest humility, and moreover with a sincere belief that they themselves are all the time very humble. They are thoroughly imbued with the spirit of their part.

You wonder sometimes how men can do certain things, and yet retain their self-respect. These things which they do that astonish you, belong to their part, fit in well with that, and must be played out properly. This is one of those subtleties in human nature which it is almost useless to enlarge upon to any one who has not already gained an inkling of it ; but to any one who has, it may be a very fruitful source of thought and observation, and may explain many apparently gross contradictions in human character and conduct.



IN our own private affairs, we are always reduced to the lowest depths of depression, when, on exercising our imaginations to the

uttermost, we cannot imagine any new circumstance to arise which will free us from some present, or some impending calamity. Things are very bad with us when imagination refuses to embody hope.

The same thing applies to public affairs. Now, one of the greatest public troubles out of which the imagination sees no felicitous exit, is the present state of warlike preparation in Europe—at least no such exit in our time.

No vigour of imagination enables us to imagine that arbitration in our time will take the place of war.

We can hardly imagine any nation bold enough to restrain itself in its competition with surrounding nations as regards the preparation of warlike armaments.

We cannot imagine, from anything we have hitherto seen, the formation of some great league among two or three of the foremost nations of Europe, which league should be based upon the principle of diminishing the individual forces of each nation, and combining them for the defence of any one of these nations that might be attacked.

We have no right to imagine that a great war will have for its consequence the diminution of warlike armaments. We have had great wars in

our time, and they have not produced this wished-for diminution.

We have no right to expect, from experience, that the advance of Christianity will diminish these armaments. I have not observed that "Most Christian Kings" and "Defenders of the Faith" have been less prone to war than the veriest infidels and pagans.

We have no right to expect that careful argument will do what we wish to have done in this matter. No question has been better argued out than that of the absurdity and mischief of maintaining these huge armaments.

We have no right to expect that common sense will do much for us in this behalf. The common sense of mankind is nearly always a constant quantity; and our average stock of common sense has not ~~done~~ much for us in this respect since the days of Attila or Genghis Khan.

In short, the whole subject presents a hazy labyrinth of folly from which no height of imagination permits you to discern a probable outcome towards good. Perhaps the only pleasant field left for the imagination in this matter is, that there may be such an improvement in the arts of destruction, that war should become absurd from the absolute certainty of its

involving all concerned in it in one common ruin.

I had omitted to say that no change in the forms of government, or displacement of dynasties, seems to hold out much hope of diminution in warlike armaments. One form of government succeeds another, one dynasty effaces another ; but there is one thing in which all dynasties and all governments agree, and that is to maintain armaments which shall be a burden to the people they rule over, and an injury and an affront to the human race.



SOME good people began to talk about the delight of " being somebody ;" for instance, of being an orator drawing towards him the hearts and souls of *men*, and swaying them supremely according to the fine impulses of his imagination, which he is able to clothe in fitting words and gestures—of being a great statesman, upon whom his party, nay, his country, depends for enlightenment and for guidance—of being an author, whose works compel sympathy even from the least sympathetic, and laughter even from the dullest and least joyous of mankind—of being a great scientific man who, by some grand

invention, soothes or controls the pain of his brother mortals, or lessens the lower forms of labour—of being a great actor, or actress, who, with a genius not far inferior to that of the poet, gives to his highest conceptions body and reality, and whose death “eclipses the gaiety of nations” —of being a great painter, or sculptor, whose work leaves his studio to be, for hundreds of years, preserved with reverent care, as a model for young sculptors and painters, and as a means of teaching mankind in what true beauty and high art consist.

To this a cynic replied in these depressing words :—

“ Always misrepresented, never understood ; his smallest faults and errors entered against him in the public ledger of his country ; the victim of an odious publicity which knows no delicacy and no reserve ; alternately vilified and flattered ; a man without sweet leisure, and whose holiday is a public reception ; intruded upon by all the vainest and the most foolish of mankind, who have only that to say to him which nobody else will listen to ; much talked of (and every one who is much talked of must, of necessity, be much calumniated) ; ever the subject-matter of all those wondrously clever people who can criticize so well, but who cannot do

anything themselves ; solitary, and yet ever in a crowd ; after death maligned in marble, or in bronze, displaying the most absurd of human costumes, so that his effigy for ever remains a mockery and a target for the juvenile population of future generations ; his biography written by enemies, or by injudicious partizans (the latter the greater misfortune of the two) ; his dearest friends and nearest relatives involved in the fellest slander which injurious calumny may pour out upon himself, when unable to reply :—such, with some variations, is mostly the fate of any one who becomes renowned in, what you are pleased to call, a highly civilised community. The end will be that every one will study to conceal his gifts, and that no one will, if he can possibly help it, become more eminent than a select vestryman is above his fellow-parishioners. A field of corn is a level thing, but not so level as the world will become when wise and clever men have realised what folly it is to make their wisdom or their cleverness known to their fellow-creatures. Even that small amount of eminence possessed by the select vestryman will be fatal to his peace. The select vestryman of mankind will never be a happy man."

Each of those who had wished to be "somebody," and had advocated the grandeur and the

joy of pre-eminence in oratory, in authorship, in science, or in art, slunk away, for each felt the force of the cynic's words, and could not but admit that, in the present imperfect state of civilization, there was far more of suffering than of joy to be derived from eminence in any field of human endeavour.



THERE are few things which are less understood than the nature of presence of mind. It has been supposed by some to be mainly the result of a cool and lymphatic temperament. By others it has been supposed to be mainly the result of fearlessness. But these are mistakes. A single example will almost suffice to verify the foregoing statements. The first Napoleon possessed, in a very high degree, this great quality of presence of mind. It is probable that he possessed it in a much higher degree than any man in his army. But he had by no means a cool and lymphatic temperament. On the contrary, he was of a very excitable and irritable nature, as most great men are apt to be. Again, it would be a very bold thing to say, that he was more fearless than any man in his army.

Doubtless there were many men as fearless as he.

We must look, therefore, for other causes. I say "causes," because any manifestation of human character is the result, in general, of several causes. But if there is one predominant cause, it is hopefulness. There are also minor causes of much importance. Men differ very much in the swiftness of their thinking. Men differ still more in their habits of concentrating thought, and relieving their attention from extraneous matters. But great proficiency in swiftness of thinking, and in concentrating thought, would not give presence of mind, unless there were hopefulness.

For a man to have presence of mind he must be sure of these three things, that in any difficulty or emergency there is always something to be done, that this something may be made the best thing to be done, and, lastly, that there is nearly always time in which to do it.

I will give a singular illustration of this—one which I have used before, but which I cannot do without on the present occasion. To all those who have studied the ways of serpents, it is known that these reptiles cannot spring at you when they are in a state of coil; they must uncoil themselves before they can make their

spring upon you. Now, a man who knows this fact in natural history, if he should come upon a coiled serpent which raises its head, and, as the man sees, means battle, this man will have presence of mind, because he has reason for hope that there is time for him to do something. Accordingly it is worth his while to think; and, so inconceivably rapid are the processes of thought, that he has time to think that it is worth his while to think. Shall he move to the right, or the left? Shall he endeavour to get to that tree? Shall he fire his revolver? If the man did not know that he had time to think, he would give himself up to despair; and, like a frog or a rabbit, stupidly await the spring of his enemy.

In this particular case the hope is born of knowledge; but in any man who is concerned in great affairs, and who requires much presence of mind, there should be a hopefulness, not depending upon knowledge—a *habit* of hopefulness arising from the fact that hopefulness generally carries the day. He should look upon all dangers and difficulties as coiled serpents, which, by their nature, must uncoil, and give him some time before they can spring upon him.

At least, there is something comforting in the foregoing view, because, if true, it shows that

presence of mind is a thing which may, to a certain extent, be acquired. We have been led a long way out of the usual road when we have come to the conclusion that presence of mind mainly depends upon hopefulness—in fact, upon a sanguine temperament, but perhaps it may not be a wrong way.

Mr. Emerson quotes a conversation of Napoleon with Las Casas, in which the great conqueror remarked, "As to moral courage, I have rarely met with the two-o'clock-in-the-morning kind: I mean unprepared courage, that which is necessary on an unexpected occasion; and which, in spite of the most unforeseen events, leaves full freedom of judgment and decision; and he did not hesitate to declare that he was himself eminently endowed with this "two-o'clock-in-the-morning" courage, and that he had met with few persons equal to himself in this respect. The reader will see that, if I am right in the foregoing analysis of presence of mind, Napoleon is wrong in attributing it to courage. But men seldom analyse carefully the qualities which they possess largely: Familiarity with these qualities renders their possessors dull in the analysis of them.

NOBODY can thoroughly estimate his or her failure in life, because the greatest failures must always be totally unknown to the failing persons themselves. This may appear an unwarrantable saying, but I am persuaded the more you think about it, the more truth you will perceive in it. Not to have loved, or not to have been loved, is perhaps the greatest failure that can have happened to man or woman. Poverty, shame, and disgrace are nothing to it. Yet the person who has never loved, or who has never been loved, cannot realize what a loss he or she has had, and how the life has been a failure.

Now the foregoing has regard to external circumstances; for to love, or to be loved, requires another person.

But perhaps the aphorism may be more adequately illustrated by something which concerns the character and nature of the failing person, himself or herself. For example, there is an unspeakable joy and delight in reverencing; but the person who has never had the felicity of paying reverence to any other being, does not know what he or she has lost. Again, the person who has never had religious aspirations, cannot know what he or she has lost, in not

having had that which is the supreme consolation in this world.

Numberless illustrations might be added to those which have been already given. And they would all tend to show that the greatest failures in any man's or woman's life are those of which he or she is totally unconscious.



SHYNESS affords one of the severest puzzles in the world of mind and thought. I do not think that anybody has ever mastered the great subject which shyness offers to a contemplative man. Some observers attribute shyness to vanity, or to self-consciousness; others, taking quite a different view, attribute it to diffidence or humility, or to an anxious desire to be loved. I confess that I have often halted between these very opposite opinions. At last I have come to a conclusion which has at least the merit, or demerit, of being entirely my own. I believe that shyness mainly proceeds from the fear of not being understood. There is nothing that mankind or womankind desires so much as to be understood. We love those who understand us. *We are at our ease with them.* To be understood is the greatest delight of every human being.

Our trust in God and love of God are based upon the same ground. We know that He alone understands us perfectly. And the passion for being understood descends into our contact with society. There also we desire to be supremely understood. All our shyness proceeds from a fear that we are not understood by those by whom we happen to be surrounded at the time.



ONE of the most frequent errors we all commit in life is the valuing a thing according to the difficulty of obtaining it. And this error is universal. I do not believe that anybody is free from it. No doubt the desire of overcoming a difficulty was implanted in the human breast for very good reasons; but we have carried this desire to an extreme; and it mostly renders us blind as to the real value of the object we pursue.

In love, for instance, the easiest conquest is the best. I know that this is a very daring saying, but I am persuaded that it is a true one. The love which soonest responds to love—even what we call “love at first sight”—is the surest love, and for this reason—that it does not depend upon any one merit or quality, but embraces in

its view the whole being. That is the love which is likely to last—incomprehensible, undefinable, unarguable about. But this love often fails to satisfy man or woman. And he or she pursues that which is difficult to obtain, but which, from that very circumstance, is not the best for him or her.

The same thing occurs in friendship. The friends that are easiest made are the best friends and the most lasting. But often an ill-conditioned or even a cantankerous man offers some attraction, by reason of difficulty, to other men, to seek his friendship. After much effort, what friendship this man can give is perhaps gained, and is ultimately found out to be worth but little.

As an additional argument for not being led away by the difficulty of the pursuit, let us remember how very short life is.

In material things the folly of pursuing them eagerly; merely because the pursuit is difficult, is very apparent. A man will seek after some almost hopeless honour, or some station in society which he never attains, or finds worthless when attained; and all the while he neglects the pleasant things in life which are round him and within the reach of his hand. The daisies and the primroses and the violets he passes with an

unheeding eye, caring only for some plant that blossoms once in a hundred years.

I repeat my belief that the most frequent error in life is the placing an inordinate value, merely on account of its difficulty, upon that which it is difficult to attain; and I would have for a motto one that has never yet been selected by mortal man, and which should run—"Choose the easiest."

I am not afraid of quelling men's efforts in high endeavour by this motto. They will always be prone enough to run after what is difficult.



THE greatest error that any governing man in high position can make, whether he be the head of a government department, of a merchant's office, or a draper's shop, is the attempt to do too much himself. This is no new remark. It is one that has been made by scores of shrewd bystanders observing the conduct of business; but I think it will be new to remark that this great error nearly always proceeds from moral defects—from vanity, conceit, fussiness, and an overweening regard for one's own peculiar way of doing work. The idea, whether consciously expressed or not, in the man's mind,

is this; "I will show them how I can do it,"—not "I will teach them how to do it for themselves." There is generally an absence of generosity in such men; they do not love the excellence of other men. And again they are pleased to forget their own mortality, and to omit seeing that the grand thing is to leave behind you those brought up under you who shall be able to do as well as yourself, or even better.

A great administrator, who had ruled over one of the first departments of the State for many years with much credit, was heard to say, "I never do anything myself." And, indeed, it is often quite enough work for any ruling man to see that the work he has to preside over is done, without taking any intrusively active part in it himself.



GOOD government, like most other things, can be bought; but it is very seldom that the governed people have been willing to pay the actual money value for good government. They are parsimonious in the only outlay which can secure a judicious national parsimony. If there ever was anything to which the common

proverb " Penny-wise and pound foolish" may be justly applied, it is in the small savings gained by inadequate payment for services rendered to the State.



THE greatest evil of domestic familiarity is that those who live together in that life, have far too soon made up their minds about each other. I am nearly sure that this must be a true maxim, for I thought that it was so when I was a boy, and looked at things from a boy's point of view ; and I think so now, when I am a man, and consider the matter from a man's point of view.

This evil practice of making up the mind too soon about the merits and demerits of our fellow-creatures, acts in a remarkable way upon great men who do great things in the world, and who are often astonished, and deeply mortified, because those who live nearest to them, their own wives, and brothers, and sisters, and children, do not seem to care much about their labours, or to feel as much interest in those labours as the outer world does.

The greatest author of the last generation, who enjoyed a European fame, was blest with a

family. Some one said to his eldest son, "How you must have delighted in your father's works!" To which he replied, "I have never read any of them." Now this reply of the son's must not be supposed to indicate heartlessness. He had made up his mind about his father: he knew what his father was like, or supposed that he did, and he naturally felt less interest in that father's writings than any ordinary person would do.

It would be a great comfort to men of genius, whether authors, artists, statesmen, or inventors, if they were to recognize this inevitable fact—namely, that the people who live nearest to them, and probably love them most, are less interested in their doings than any other persons. They know all about them, as they think. They have made up their minds about them, and they do not want books, or pictures, or statues, or speeches, or inventions to tell them what sort of persons are their husbands, or fathers, or brothers, or sisters, or intimate friends. Domestic familiarity has killed curiosity; and curiosity has something to do with the interest with which we regard any new work of a worker who is not familiarly known to us.



HOW a man treats a dead secret is the best test of his powers of secrecy.

The foregoing is a sentence which requires explanation, and may best be explained by taking a particular instance. If a man becomes acquainted, confidentially, with the details of a bill which a Minister is about to bring into the House of Commons—that is evidently a living secret. Afterwards, after the bill has been brought in, the secret may be considered dead and gone; and yet it may be a proof of want of reticence—indeed, almost of want of honour—in a man to show that the details of that bill had *ever* been confided to him.

A still more delicate instance of deficiency of secretive power may be shown by the way in which a man reveals the confidence that was reposed in him years ago, the principal persons who were concerned in the secret being dead.

It is very difficult to be clear and explicit in illustrating what I mean; but I feel certain that an observant person, when his attention has once been called to the statement I have made above, will have no difficulty in discerning what is meant by a "dead secret," and how the treat-

ment of it by the man who has been confided in, will almost demonstrate whether he is worthy of having confidence reposed in him for the future.



MANY thousands of workers will rise this morning to pursue their work : many thousands of critics (their natural enemies as the workers would say) will rise to pursue their vocation.

Without undervaluing criticism, we may admit that a great deal of needless pain is caused by it ; and that, as a general rule, we all sympathize more with the doers than the critics.

The object of this short essay is to aid the criticised in bearing criticism.

The first thing is, not to pretend not to care for hostile criticism. That form of insincerity never helped any man.

One of the best comforts in the case of hostile criticism is to remember the proverb, " Many men, many minds." Any man who has done anything which provokes much comment, will tell you that it is astonishing how diverse are the opinions of persons whom you would admit to be equally qualified for criticizing. That which pleases one, disgusts another ; and *vice versa*.

This diversity of opinion in mankind might alone suffice to comfort those who furnish matter for the criticism in the world.

But, unfortunately, the worst part of criticism is misrepresentation. No man can pretend to be quite indifferent to that. You, the person criticized, are made out to have said this, thought that, done the other thing; and, in reality, you did not say this, think that, or do the other thing. This is undoubtedly a great grievance.

But look at the whole matter as a question of forces. So much force is lost by this misrepresentation; but do not take the matter to heart, as if misrepresentation were a circumstance that belonged to you alone. It besets all human effort.

Or, again, consider the matter as a merchant would any separate venture of his, of which he calculates the gain or loss by double entry. There were such and such prosperous winds in favour of the good ship *Mary-Anne*, and there were such and such adverse winds against the good ship. She came into a port where there were no British goods, or she came into a port which was over-stocked with them. In a word, separate the venture from yourself, and consider it as a distinct transaction.

Vain and retrospective persons suffer most

from hostile criticism. Go on working. What you *have* done—what *has* been said about it—soon moves into the region of the past, and it moves much more quickly for you, when you give your mind to attempting something new.

As a general rule, never reply to hostile criticism: do not waste your fire by returning the shot aimed at you from behind a stone wall. This, of course, applies chiefly to anonymous criticism, which is now the principal public criticism in the world.

We must beware, however, of confining our thoughts upon criticism to that branch of it which deals with politics, literature or art. Domestic criticism is perhaps the most common form of criticism, and not the least difficult to bear. But the general rules given above are not inapplicable in this case. And this additional rule may be given—namely, that the person criticized, who is most probably the active and decisive person, should reflect that there is little else left for the other persons but to criticize; and he or she would not like their minds to be inert. It is only slaves who do not venture to criticize. Every ruler, whether of a family or of a kingdom, must admit that his actions and his decisions would hardly be of interest to himself if they would not endure, and ultimately triumph over, the criticisms of those whom he governs.

NO man can doubt that government is becoming more and more difficult in the present age. The criticism, therefore, of governmental action becomes more and more important. There is a possibility of its rising to such a pitch as to enervate the action of Government.

A Government is placed in especial difficulty as regards hostile criticism ; and for this reason—because it cannot always explain. In questions of art or literature, although the person criticized will not (as I have said above) be wise to reply directly to his critic, yet he has the power of addressing his own little public, and pointing out to them that the criticism is harsh or unjust. The same thing applies as regards family criticism. But it often happens that a Government must bear silently all kinds of hostile criticism, being restrained from reply by sound reasons of State policy. Every one who has been versed in matters of government knows this, and must have often felt that a single sentence, which, however, cannot *then* be spoken, would amply answer the hostile criticism which the Government has to endure.

There is one thing which is often forgotten in criticizing the action of Government. It is that

very few persons are concerned in this action—sometimes only two or three. It is true that those two or three frequently know more about the subject than all the world besides. But it is a hard thing for them to meet and reply to the criticism of the whole world. If people in general saw this matter in its true light, they would, from their love of fairness, and from their anxiety to protect the weaker side (*weaker, numerically*), beware of giving too much weight to hostile criticism when directed against any one of the various departments into which Government is, necessarily, divided.



THIS is said to be an age in which people are exceedingly averse from taking responsibility. Perhaps this statement is an exaggeration. Probably in all ages people were very much averse from taking responsibility. But still this aversion is likely to be greater in a thoughtful period, when men have found out how much there is to be said for every side of a question.

How comes it, then, that the fear of responsibility seems to have so little influence in restraining men from repeating injurious reports of

others, for which they have really no ground but hearsay? Perhaps it would not be too much to say, that for one person in ten who would not invent a calumny, or knowingly add to it, there is not one in ten thousand who would hesitate to repeat it, without having the slightest real knowledge of the matter—not appreciating the responsibility he is thereby taking upon himself.



IT astonishes thoughtless people to find that some of the wisest men in talk and writing, commit some of the greatest errors in action. These thoughtless people forget that it is an immense advantage for a man in talk or writing to have himself always before his mind as a person who has, in action, committed the greatest follies. Montaigne says: "There are as ridiculous stories to be told about me, as about any man in the world."



SELFISHNESS, when it is punished by the world, is mostly punished because it is connected with egotism. A man may help himself

to an exorbitant portion of the good things of this life, if he will only keep quiet about it, and not obtrude himself upon people's notice. The cat takes the best place in the room, and nobody grudges it to her, because her purring satisfaction is not loudly obtruded on the company. But to bask like a cat in the warmest place, and scream like a parrot in its cage, will never do.

It is not by any means, of necessity, that selfishness and egotism are combined: they are two distinct qualities. But frequently they run into one another; and then selfishness is liable to be punished for the faults of its noisy mate.



IT is not so sad a thing after all, to contemplate ruins as it is to contemplate new work very badly done. What ruins can make one feel so melancholy as seeing "long unlovely," newly-built, gardenless streets of ill-arranged houses, rising up and deforming the suburbs of great towns? In looking at new buildings of this kind, the sense comes over one of a decadence, rather than an increase, of power in mankind. And this is very disheartening. Besides, one foresees that in a few years, these buildings will

have a squalidity wholly unrelieved by the softening and beautifying effects of age. They will still be new, and yet will be decayed.



THERE is a common belief, which perhaps is just, that there is not so much friendship in the world as there used to be. Various causes have been assigned for this—that men are less heroic, more querulous, more selfish, more domestic. In my opinion the real cause is want of time. And it must be remarked that to keep up friendship, it is not sufficient to have spare time now and then ; but you require an amount of certain and continuous leisure.

Observe under what conditions of life friendship has had the greatest sway, and has been most prominently developed. There are still great friendships among boys at school and young men at college. There have been great friendships in comparatively barbaric times, for barbarism almost ensures a certain continuity of leisure. David and Jonathan had the time to be loving friends. The fabled Nisus and Euryalus did not belong to the nineteenth century. Again, in the Middle Ages, when men had a large amount of steady leisure, there were instances of signal friendship.

What we call civilization has, up to the present time, made increasing demands upon each man's time. Should this civilization ever be a prosperous and successful thing, it will give an assured continuity of leisure ; and then you will see that friendship will revive amongst men.

As an illustration of what I mean, I have no doubt that benevolent persons must in general have a large capacity for friendship ; but the evils of the world are so great that their attention is absorbed in the endeavour to mitigate those evils. Great writers of fiction of the present day have described satirically persons whose whole minds are so devoted to benevolent projects that they even neglect family duties. The whole of that class of persons would afford excellent material for friendship if their affections were once freed from the predominant desire to benefit the world in general, whereas now the lamentable aspect of the world compels them to devote all their energies to the removal of that particular evil which happens to have most attracted their benevolent imaginations.

Then, again, the monstrous size of great cities in our age tends to diminish the possibility of maintaining close friendship.

All I would contend is, that men and women have the same capacity for friendship, the same

delight in it, the same craving for it, as heretofore ; but that an imperfect civilization has rendered the manifestation, and even the reality, of friendship more difficult, principally as regards the want of certain and continuous leisure.



AT first it surprises one that love should be made the principal staple of all the best kinds of fiction ; and perhaps it is to be regretted that it is only one kind of love that is chiefly depicted in works of fiction. But that love itself is the most remarkable thing in human life there cannot be the slightest doubt. For, see what it will conquer. It is not only that it prevails over selfishness ; but it has the victory over weariness, tiresomeness, and familiarity. When you are with the person loved, you have no sense of being bored. This humble and trivial circumstance is the great test, the only sure and abiding test, of love. With the persons you do not love, you are never supremely at your ease. You have some of the sensation of walking upon stilts. In conversation with them, however much you admire them and are interested in them, the horrid idea will cross your mind of " what shall I say next ?" Converse with them

is not perfect association. But with those you love the satisfaction in their presence is not unlike that of the relation of the heavenly bodies to one another, which, in their silent revolutions, lose none of their attractive power. The sun does not talk to the world ; but it attracts it.



THE greatest luxury of riches is that they enable you to escape so much good advice. The rich are always advising the poor ; but the poor seldom venture to return the compliment.



PERHAPS the most vast discomfort, not to say misery, endured in this world, consists in enforced companionship. Millions of people will rise to-morrow morning who will have to pass the day with companions who are profoundly uncongenial to them. And the worst of it is that uncongeniality is a thing which goes on deepening and widening.

Is there any remedy to be found for this evil ? I think possibly there may be. I think that a person may by thought encourage and develop congeniality. A third part, at least, of uncongeniality depends upon misunderstanding ;

and that misunderstanding depends upon an insufficiency of imagination, which prevents your looking at other people from the point of view from which they look at themselves. That this theory is not far wrong seems to me clear from the fact that great men, endowed with high powers of imagination, and large affectionate sympathies, suffer so much less from the real or supposed uncongeniality of those who surround them than other and commoner people do. It is the narrow-minded, fastidious person who suffers most from uncongeniality. A Mirabeau, an Alcibiades, a Bacon, a Shakespeare finds something congenial to him in all those with whom he associates. It is the peculiar property of genius to evolve congeniality in all those with whom it comes in contact. Genius discovers what is the prime moving power, the *causa causans*, as the metaphysicians would say, in each individual character. It touches that source of affection and sympathy with the magic wand of affectionate imagination; and from the most unpromising rock there comes forth an outburst of congeniality which cannot in its full flow be educed by meaner and less potent hands. But all persons might do something in this direction; and, depend upon it, when you find persons difficult to live with, and thoroughly uncongenial

to you, it is that you have failed to discover and to appeal to those primeval and better elements of their characters, which would yield pleasant fruits to an intelligent cultivation of congeniality on your part.



I ENTIRELY agree with those who say that men seldom, die prematurely of over-work. What some men die of, is the want of prosperity in their work. It was a wonderfully shrewd saying, whoever said it, that we do not die of the work we do, but of that which we find we cannot do. Men die prematurely of chagrin. That word chagrin is a very remarkable word. The sound of it almost conveys the full meaning of it. And here I may venture to remark that there are no two words which signify the same thing exactly. There are no such things as synonyms. For example, in this present case, chagrin conveys much more than disappointment. You may be very much disappointed and yet take it very little to heart. Pope says :—

“ Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,
That single act gives half the world the spleen.”

Belinda might still have been delightful, if she had been disappointed only.

Chagrin is a lasting thing. It means that part of disappointment which touches ourselves, and respecting which we feel that we are the guilty parties. It is almost wonderful to see with what complacency men will bear the greatest sorrows and disappointments in the causing of which they feel that they have had no share. People do not cry much over an earthquake: they are not chagrined by its effects. In order to have a lasting chagrin, you must, yourself, have been largely the cause of the disaster which afflicts you.

To end, by what I began by indicating, I contend that men die, when they die of any mental disease, not from overwork, but from the sense of failure in their work.



IN a recent novel by a late Prime Minister there is the following account given of critics.

“ ‘To-morrow,’ he said, ‘the critics will commence. You know who the critics are? The men who have failed in literature and art.’ ”

This is very droll, and very witty, but it is only a small portion of the truth.

The critics may be classified under three heads.

1. There are those who are too timid or too fastidious to do anything themselves—men, perhaps, of considerable ability—and they naturally find an exercise for their abilities in criticising the works of others.

2. There are the born critics, men whose highest powers naturally take the form of criticism.

3. There are the professional critics, who take up criticism as they would any other occupation which procures them a tolerably easy livelihood.

The doers are very averse from criticising ; and, as they are the only persons who could criticise consummately, criticism is in general the worst done thing in the world.

Occasionally a great doer takes up the part of a narrator or a critic ; and then this work is admirably done. For instance, a great commander or a skilful soldier narrates, or criticises, his own campaigns, or the campaigns of others ; and then you have a remarkable work.

But, for the most part, criticism lacks that which should give it the greatest charm, the most assured insight, and the profoundest usefulness, namely, the knowledge which can only be elicited by action. It is only those who have themselves done something, who can appreciate thoroughly the difficulty of doing. You

may infer this from the severity and want of toleration which always mark—I should say deform—the criticisms of the young. Imagining all kinds of conduct to be easy, and all forms of endeavour to be capable of being fully realized, the young make no allowances. Theirs is a purely mathematical world? and they are astonished when a certain weight fails to produce a certain effect. They have no conception of the difficulties which friction introduces in the moral as well as the material world. The critic who has never done anything, is always young—a pleasant thing for him, but a very terrible cause of misrepresentation as affecting those whom he attempts to criticise.



A MAN'S actions are often the least significant indications of his character. His words betray much more—his thoughts, were they known, would reveal infinitely more—of the real man. There are, doubtless, many personages in history who are damnified by a few notable actions, some of which were absolutely contradictory to their characters.

An opponent of the foregoing assertion will maintain that “any action of a man is the result

of the main current of his thoughts, and must embody his character." That I deny. The action may be the result of quite a minor current.

To pursue this metaphor—the main current of a river flows one way ; but there are minor currents, created by some peculiar circumstances, which take quite a different course—produce a backwater, or an eddy, or a small whirlpool ; and these comparatively exceptional movements often attract the greatest attention, and cause the greatest disaster.

Besides, it is to be recollected that actions occupy so little time in a man's life. Benvenuto Cellini, according to his own account, did one or two notably bad actions in the course of his career. Yet, probably, if we knew Cellini's life thoroughly, we should find that seventy-eight of each eighty of his waking minutes were given to art, the other two to wickedness.

Another illustration might be found in the action of Mr. Babbage's calculating machine, which, after grinding out numbers in continuous arithmetical progression, suddenly produces a lawless number which seems to have nothing to do with the proper formula. Now, in human life, there is an additional cause, and a very potent one, for this eccentricity. It is that you can always urge

as a motive with a man for his doing something which you wish him to do—namely, that it is contrary to his usual practice, and in opposition to his prevailing course of thought. How many a man, for instance, has been persuaded to do a harsh, severe, or cruel thing because those who surround him, din into his ears such words as these—"You are always pardoning: you are always too lenient: in justice to others, you must be severe now." And so the much-advised man deviates into severity or cruelty, to silence clamour, *or to show his independence of his own prevailing temperament*, for once.

The above is not meant as an excuse for bad actions, but as an aid to tolerance when we are judging of these actions. The men who do them, when the actions are exceptional, are sure to suffer greatly from remorse by reason of the exceptionality; and there will be no occasion to enlighten them as to the wrongfulness of the action by harsh judgment on the part of the bystanders.



DOCTORS deplore the carelessness of their patients and of the world in general, in eating. But careless as we are in this respect, we are much more careful as to what we eat than

as to what we read. And so we vex the finer organ of the two.

And then there is this to be considered, that we are never sure that we can forget what we read. It will return to us some day or other as surely as a nursery rhyme.

This one thought might check inconsiderate reading—namely, that we are filling up a vessel, which is not infinite in capacity, with what is useless or harmful. As far as we know, this vessel does not leak at all ; or, if it does leak, it is with indiscriminate leakage, and is so constructed as not to allow folly only to permeate, and wisdom to remain.



AFTER a certain age, when the character is set, as it were, there are only two things which can greatly affect it—sorrow and responsibility. If one could weigh the motive power that affects the mind, it would be found that one ounce of responsibility laid upon a man, has more effect in determining his conduct and even his character, than tons of good advice, lay or clerical, or hundred-weights even of good example.

Poets have amused themselves by imagining the effect of some wondrous change of condition

—such as the lout being put into the lord's bed, and rising in the morning to receive the due observances rendered to lordship. But there is hardly any change that would be so droll, and at the same time so effective, as to make the irresponsible man rise in the morning with a sudden weight of responsibility upon him—the critic being put into the skin of the doer, and being obliged to do or decide something, instead of talking or writing about another person's deeds or decisions—the writer in a newspaper being suddenly endowed with the lineaments, and obliged to perform the functions, of a minister of State.



I DO not know that there is anything that one could implant in a young person's mind which would tend more, both to make his fortune, and to make him happy, than a belief that people mostly spoke well of him behind his back. This notion would suit all dispositions, and would make the best of them. It would delight the vain, rejoice the affectionate, neutralize the quarrelsome, and not be displeasing even to the proud.

But would it be true? To a considerable extent it would. There is a certain amount of

ill-natured speech (*medisance* the French aptly call it) to which all alike are liable, in their absence. It is the exact opposite to politeness. Even your brothers and sisters do not say the things to your face which everybody says or admits behind your back.

But after this (except in the case of the great, the powerful, the distinguished, or the famous—who are almost always calumniated) there is not much extra ill-natured speech about men behind their backs—not a hundredth part so much as sensitive people and young people fancy.



THE main torment of modern life lies in the increasing number of decisions which each man has to make every day. And as civilized life becomes more and more complicated, this evil, attendant upon it, is greater and greater. We should therefore prepare for it carefully in education. With a foolish person you need not take much pains, for he has little difficulty in making up what a late lord chancellor said "he is pleased to call his mind." But when you have the training of a youth who shows largeness and discursiveness of mind, one of the best things you can do for him is to habituate him to make

decisions swiftly, and to abide by them steadily. Never mind if they are wrong decisions. Let him find out the wrongness, and suffer for it. But insist upon his deciding speedily. It will be in matters comparatively small that he will have to suffer for making a wrong decision while he is young ; but you will make him acquire a habit which is invaluable in after-life. He will thus escape the anguish of indecisiveness, which is the great drawback upon natures constituted as I have supposed his to be.



WHY is it that the reflexion of a thing is always beautiful, far more beautiful than the thing itself?

"It is," said an artist (to whom the question was first addressed), "because in reflexion there is always concentration ; and as Beauty concentrates itself, it dismisses all that is mean, ignoble and ungainly in detail."

"I do not know why it is, but so it is," said a moralizing man, "and there would be few better means of curing the many heart-aches of envy than persuading it to observe this pleasant magical deceit of reflexion, for envious people judge always of the loveliness and value of what they

do not possess by the reflexion of it in the mirrors of their fancy, which can beautify all other fortunes but their own."

"I can vouch for the truth of the saying," exclaimed another: "I understand the language of birds, and could tell you what was once said, or sung, upon the subject, by them."

"Birds!" interrupted the cynic of the company—"the only creatures whom man has failed to imitate! He can 'do,' as we say, the tiger; but has hitherto made but a very bad hand—I should say wing, of it, in his imitation of the dove. But proceed, Mr. Dervish. Dervishes are the only people, as far as I have heard, who understand the language of birds." The so-called Dervish then told his fable.

"Concealed amidst the neighbouring bushes, I was looking down into a little pool. It was not a very beautiful object in itself—a mere angular pond which had been made upon the downs by the shepherds, for the sheep to drink at. But few things in nature could excel the loveliness of the long ranges of crimsoned evening clouds as they appeared reflected in that unshapely piece of water.

"The birds, unheeding me, flew down to the pond to sip their little sips of water before going to nest. I admiringly watched them throwing

up their pretty heads with all the enjoyment of connoisseurs in water drinking.

"A water-wagtail whom I knew, and had before noticed as a captious, envious little bird, said, 'The water is not so bad, though the pond, made by those stupid, heavy, wingless creatures, men, is frightful. But what must be the beauty of the heavens, since even here they show themselves so lovely! A lucky bird our friend the lark is, and not for any merits, that I can see, of its own, to be able to soar into the heavens and see the flaming clouds so closely.'

"'No, brother wagtail,' replied the gracious lark, envy me not, nor think that all you see reflected here is equally beautiful when you come close to it. I soar on high because it is my nature so to do; but I do not find the clouds so beautiful when I come near them as they seem in this poor pond, which, poor as it is, endows them with a beauty not their own, as I know who live so much amongst them.'"



HE brings me my food in the morning and the evening, at the proper times; he takes me to this meadow, where he has grown nice sweet grass for me: a very good sort of creature

is man. You should see how proud and fond my own man is of me, and how much he thinks of my health. Only this morning, after looking lovingly at me, he said to his wife, "I think he will do now: he will never be fatter or look better."

Thus spoke a big, good-natured bullock to a fox who was sitting in the sunshine near his burrow.

The fox said that he could not altogether agree in this praise of man. Men annoyed and terrified him with those foolish dogs.

"Quite a mistake, my friend," replied the bullock. "The men ride after the dogs to bring them back, and to see that they do no harm to you. It is only their sport, as they call it. Why, what did I hear my own man say the other day? 'The fellow deserves to be hanged who kills a fox; and I *would* hang him too.'"

The fox is not a confiding animal, but he was much pleased with this kind feeling to him, shown by the bullock's own man; and the fox said that, for the future, he did not think he should trouble himself to run away from the hunters so fast, as it was only sport that they were having with him.

"But," he added, for a fox's suspiciousness is never quite dormant, "I do not see that men are

so good to this donkey. They beat him, and load him, and put a weight to his leg, even when they let him go into the field with you."

The donkey had been near them, and had been listening to the conversation; but, not being in good society amongst animals, he had not ventured to say a word.

"Pooh," said, or rather blew, the bullock, "he is but an ass. What respectable animal could demean himself by behaving well to him: he is only fit to carry coals in panniers."

The fox trotted off, saying that he should be back in the evening after the geese had gone to bed.

The bullock and the donkey browsed on, but did not speak to one another.

When noon came, the bullock's own man entered the field, in company with another man in a blue frock. Seeing this man, the bullock trembled all over, hardly knowing why. The men led the bullock away. As they passed the donkey, it heard them talking about what would be the weight of the carcase, and it knew that the bullock was to be slaughtered.

A little later in the day there were heard hallooings and barkings, and the fox was seen by the donkey making his weary way across the field, staggering towards his burrow. He was

too slow to-day ; and, before he reached home, was torn to pieces by the dogs.

The donkey moralized, as is the way with many asses, and said to itself, "Better be a beast of burden, and carry their coals for them, than serve their appetites or their pleasures."



MERE hardness is often mistaken for cleverness, or rather gives a biting edge to it, which makes one think more highly of it than it deserves.

There is no generation that ever lived in which this mistake has been so frequently made as in our own.

And it must be admitted that the hard man has often a great apparent advantage in reasoning, as he is troubled by no sentimental difficulties, abjures all feeling, and keeps closely to the aspect of the affair at the present moment.

Yet his talk is often like a thin, shallow stream, very clear and with a pebbly bottom ; but such as will not float anything that is capable of holding human beings.

These hard men are boastful too, and thank God for their deficiencies—in that they have not been afflicted with much sentiment, affection, piety, pity, or imagination, to mislead them.

LET us always make much of odd and eccentric people. The world, without them, would be very much like the sea without salt. If the reverence which has been paid in some countries to madness, had been devoted to eccentricity, it would have been a reverence much more worthily bestowed.

The merit of eccentric people is that they resist conformity. It is a bold thing to say, but I think you will, upon reflection, admit it to be true, that it is almost impossible to find a good metaphorical illustration of conformity—of the action (direct and reflex) of the world's example upon the individual denizens of the world. Sometimes it has been likened to the action of a great machine which takes up all kinds of material and grinds it into little bits of one form and shape. This illustration will not do; for the material in the case we are considering is active as well as passive.

A better illustration, perhaps, is that furnished by gravitation—where each unit is attracted by innumerable other units, and so is constrained to take a certain course; but in this case each unit has its own proper influence. It wants to draw the whole universe to itself; and therein fails to resemble conformity.

Then there are agencies which operate as the bite of the *tarantula* was supposed to do, which compelled all the people so bitten to dance to the sound of music. But this illustration also fails, for here again the people acted upon by the bite have no influence upon their fellow-sufferers.

The remarkable thing about conformity is that millions of people will do, or endure something which each individual dislikes to do, or to endure—will wear a covering for the head, or be victimized by starch in other of his garments, abominating this covering and detesting this starch.

Nay, more: anyone who has studied conformity will admit that it is possible to conceive that each one of these millions of people might have confided to all the rest how much he dislikes the thing which they all conform to. And yet the universally-hated thing shall continue to prevail just as much as if it were universally loved.

Now here come in the force and power of eccentricity. Wisdom may talk till it grows black in the face, it will not effect a return to common sense without it is aided by eccentricity. For instance, our only chance of altering, or even mitigating, the excruciating tiresomeness of mo-

dern society, in what it calls its recreations and its pleasures, is in eccentric people boldly deviating from the ordinary practice in reference to their amusements. The wisest of men may in vain protest against late hours, over-crowded parties, unreasonable length of entertainments, absurd costume, or any of the myriad follies which fashion and conformity dictate. It will have no effect unless this wisdom should get into the mind of some eccentric persons who will dare to set up their odd ways of action in contradiction to the world.

Never mind, therefore, what the motive of eccentricity may be—whether vanity, or perverseness, or rebelliousness, or indocility, or a keen appreciation of sound reasoning and good sense. Always contemplate it with a very indulgent eye and make your pets of eccentric people, for they, more surely than any other persons, will make broad the paths of freedom for you.



THERE is one subject about which I have always longed to say something which should be striking and original, and should do some good. But I find great difficulty in doing so. In general when I have taken up a subject, and thought over it for some little time, I am

molested by the number of views which come into my mind about it. The ideas jostle one another ; and I always find great difficulty in methodizing them, and putting them in due order—if indeed I ever succeed in doing so.

But, with respect to the subject in question, I feel a certain barrenness of ideas. Perhaps it is because I care about it so much, and am unusually anxious to do it justice. As it is when one knows and loves the face of a friend or relative so well that one cannot describe it, or even depict it to oneself, by reason of that intimate knowledge and affection.

The subject in question is good-temper. With regard to it, I am puzzled not only as to saying anything myself about it, worthy to be said ; but even as to quoting any saying about it that is really memorable. Only two such sayings occur to me. One is that of a lady who “received” as it is called, an important section of London society,—namely that which is most connected with literature, art and science. She was a woman of the highest gifts for such receptions ; and she said to me something of this kind, “Cleverness is frequent amongst you men—my rooms swarm with clever people ; but how few of you have real sweetness of temper. I have come to the conclusion that good temper is the rarest gift to humanity.”

I have often mentioned this saying before ; but it comes in most appropriately now.

The other saying is that of the celebrated Bishop Wilson. I conjecture that some one was talking disparagingly of good temper in his presence when he exclaimed, "Good temper, sir ! why good temper is nine-tenths of Christianity."

Now almost the only thing I have to say of my own about good temper is that it not only includes the charity of St. Paul, which no doubt the good Bishop had in his mind ; but also something over and above charity—namely, an innate felicity of temperament which makes charity a comparatively easy virtue to the man who has the good fortune to possess that kind of temperament. To use a strong metaphor, good temper is, as it were, light and air to the intellectual and moral nature of the man who possesses it.

What irks and irritates me most in the contemplation of this subject is that there is a popular notion—a popular delusion—that good temper belongs rather to an inferior class of people, to silly, heedless, undistinguishing persons. This is a total error. If you look through the list of the greatest personages in the world you will find that the super-eminent amongst them (I use that word "super-eminent" advisedly)

were to be noted for good temper. The greatest men of letters, the greatest conquerors, the greatest kings were essentially good-tempered men. Shakespeare, Bacon, Julius Cæsar, Charlemagne, Charles the Fifth, Henry of Navarre, Horace, Chaucer, Montaigne, Goethe, Raphael, and Sir Walter Scott were good-tempered people.

One important remark has here to be made. It is that you must carefully separate the irritability of genius from ill-temper. If you could make that separation fairly, you would find a host of men who would enter into the good-tempered class; but who are now, from an inattention to this important distinction, excluded from that class by the ordinary observers in the world. In reality almost the principal characteristic of a man of genius is good-temper, or at least good-nature, which fact we sometimes fail to perceive, because his good temper or his good nature is complicated with irritability of nature. There are no persons so tolerant as great men; and this tolerance has its source more in the heart than in the head.

With respect to the blessings which good-temper sheds around it, it is almost impossible to speak too highly. It may be a common-place thing to say, but it has the charming truthfulness of common-place, to say, that more than half the

difficulties of the world would be allayed or removed by the exhibition of good temper. In official or parliamentary life, most people, who have had great experience, will tell you that the main difficulty in accomplishing a good work, consists, not in the innate arduousness of the work itself, but in prevailing over the humours and tempers of the men who have to frame it, to consider it, and to bring it into execution. Temper is not only, as the good bishop said, "nine-tenths of Christianity," but it constitutes nine-tenths of secular success as well as of religious life.

It will be said that good temper is a natural gift; and that it cannot be added to, or diminished from, by thought being taken about it. That I deny. Every gift that is given to man can be largely added to, or detracted from, by the study of it, and by the encouragement, or discouragement given to it by the opinion of the world. You may depend upon this, that if the world in general took the high view that this present writer does of the beauty and effectiveness of good temper, there would be many more good-tempered people in the world, or at least there would be many more people who would not conceal their good temper. As it is at present, there are many persons who think that they manifest intellectual superiority by taking

an unkind, or an ill-natured, or a sarcastic view, of human life and of human effort. It would be quite different, if from their earliest years, people who are blest with the possession of good temper, were encouraged to produce it, and to rely upon it to the uttermost.



PROVERBS have not always been an un-
mixed benefit to the world. There are several very mean and malignant proverbs, embodying the wit of one man, and the ill-nature, not the wisdom, of many men. One of the worst of these proverbs is, "There is no smoke without some fire,"—a proverb which has lent its aid to thousands of gross calumnies. Perhaps we might venture to adopt a counteracting proverb which has at least as much truth, physically and metaphysically, as the foregoing one. It is "the less the fire, the greater the smoke."



I SUPPOSE one might as well advise the north-east wind to be gentle and pleasant, as advise young men as to the sort of girl they should fall in love with. But I think there is nothing more significant of the nature of a girl than her dress. You may be sure that there is

a great deal of worth in her who keeps at a considerable distance from the prevailing fashion, whatever it may be, without at the same time incurring the risk of appearing singular. This, too, not from its being a proof of her being modest and quiet, but because it gives evidence of her possessing an art which is of signal importance in ensuring domestic felicity. It is the art of making the best of herself :—*Se faire valoir*, as the French, in their delicate way of expressing things, would describe it.

Most modes of fashion, even when carried only to a moderate and not to an extreme extent, are pre-eminently ugly and unbecoming. It is a hunch here, or a bunch there, or an inflation of this garment, or a skimping of that, which is the sign of supreme fashion in dress. It generally sins equally against beauty, propriety, health, and becomingness. The girl who knows how most dexterously to avoid the evils of it, without, as I said before, becoming singular, is an adroit person, who will know, throughout life, how to make the best of herself in every circumstance and under all kinds of difficulties.



ALTHOUGH no two individuals are profoundly like one another, so that each character to be mastered requires to be studied separately, there are general classifications of character which it is very desirable to notice. For instance, most men may be classed under two heads—those who care for their opinions, and those who do not. Of course the former is much the smaller class. With them, their opinions are always "stuff o' the conscience." They form their opinions carefully; they are much averse to telling anything about them while they are in the process of formation; and, when formed, these opinions are valued by their owners as property of the highest kind.

The second class are certainly very open and frank in the expression of their opinions, whether half-formed or wholly formed: they take now one side, now another, of any question at issue: they do not care a straw about consistency: in short, they play with their opinions.

Now I think, if you observe both classes carefully, you will admit that the second class contains people as good and as clever as any of those in the first class, although there is this immense difference between their modes of dealing with this important matter, the formation of opinions.

The original cause of this difference is probably hereditary, for I think it may be observed that this care for their opinions runs in families. I account for it thus. The sons and daughters, from their earliest years, have heard their father express, in the familiar talk of domestic life, his care for his opinions. They have heard him say, "I wish I could make up my mind about this question," "I wish I could see my way to voting for A. or B.;" and they will have observed how, in conversation with other men, he has sought to guard himself from the expression of a half formed opinion. They thus imbibe the notion that opinions are valuable commodities.

Statesmen and governing men should pay great attention to the opinions of those persons who occupy the first class above described. Not that things are always carried by them, for there is often, both in public and private affairs, an ugly rush of folly which carries everything before it. But still, in the long run, these few people of the first class, who care for their opinions, have great weight with mankind.

THE END.

